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Sustainable and Substantive: It's Fashionable and Practical to Be Green

Cover: The Hideaway by Meridian Development, winner of 2008 Saskatoon Municipal Heritage Award for Infill development.
Unless noted otherwise, all stories and photographs in Saskatoon Home are by Darrell Noakes

Nature at our Service

HOME

Saskatoon Home celebrates the emerging Saskatoon style of home design and construction. We also celebrate the ideas, work, and results of the best design and construction companies, as well as the service companies that support the builder and renovator industry.

This issue again has been the result of the hard work and dedication of Darrell Noakes and Dona Sturmanis, who have contributed the text, and the majority of the images, that appear in these pages.

Our feature presentations are concerned with the growing in-

terest in sustainable design and building principles, and how we can best use them in the service of our homes. Wind and solar power are demonstrated great potential for offsetting the rising costs and complexity of oil and gas. Innovation is an important part of the culture of our region, and a growing number of companies and technologies are being developed right here in our city. Our builders are demonstrated ever more ability to provide solutions, and our local, provincial and federal governments are providing some much-needed leadership in ena-

bling us to deal with the rising tide of change, both in the way we live and the homes we occupy. And it appears that we can look forward to ever more innovation, change and leadership in our community as it confronts the realities of the future.

In this issue we also provide a varied selection of short pieces that profile companies that provide quality goods and services, tips and advice for living well and sensibly in our homes, and showcases of homes and developments that deliver best in class value and style.

Going green was once a daunting task, and we were not always sure of achieving the results we were looking for. Today, more than ever, we have resources and expertise available to us to make our transition to a balanced, sustainable way of living relatively easy. And the future looks bright, for us and our community. We intend to continue our coverage of this timely and important issue.

We ask you to support our efforts, and those of the advertisers who grace these pages.

We sincerely welcome your comments on the stories we present and we invite you to suggest future ideas and projects that should be covered.

Robert MacDonald

Publisher, Editor, Designer

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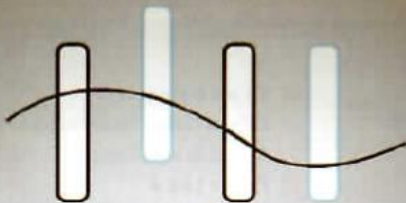
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FRONTLINES

Building Saskatchewan Green Conference Includes Public Events for 2008

The Saskatchewan Chapter of the Canada Green Building Council is organizing the Building Saskatchewan Green conference and sustainable living expo, October 30 and 31 at TCU Place.

"We're on the cutting edge with this conference," says Curtis Olson, one of the organizers. "This is one of those very public events that's going to show people what's going on in the city, what's going on in their backyard, and it's going to be a really phenomenal conference this year."

Mike Holmes, from the Holmes on Homes television show, is expected to give the keynote speech, on green renovations and options available to homeowners.

This will be the fifth year of the event, but the first that public participation has been actively sought.

"It should be a really great forum and a great trade show," says Olson.

"The goal of this year's conference is to show people in

Saskatoon ways that they can green up their lifestyle. It's all about helping people discover what they can do differently in their own community. It will be a very public forum, not just focused on industry professionals."

The Saskatchewan Green Building Council is a grassroots volunteer organization, whose members are working to develop sustainability in the building industry.

Saskatoon Housing Starts Nearly Double in First Quarter

The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's residential construction survey for March shows that housing starts in Saskatoon rose 85 per cent, with 590 units begun since the first of the year, compared to 319 during the first three months of 2007.

However, the corporation expects housing starts throughout most of the country to drop in 2008, according to its second quarter Housing Market Outlook, Canada Edition report.

The corporation expects higher mortgage carrying costs to be a catalyst for the decrease

in residential construction in seven provinces. Saskatchewan isn't one of those provinces, though, where housing starts are forecast to 6,600, compared to 6,007 actual starts in 2007. For Saskatoon, the outlook is even brighter. The corporation is forecasting 2,550 new starts in the city, an increase of 7.1 per cent over 2007, when 2,380 housing starts were recorded. Included in that figure is a forecast 11.1 per cent increase in single detached housing starts, to 1,650 this year, compared to 1,485 actual starts in 2007.

Saskatoon Leads the Nation in Housing Price Growth

For the 11th straight month, prices rose at the fastest national pace in Saskatoon, Statistics Canada reported in its new housing price index in May. The city saw a year-over-year price increase of 46.2 per cent, down from a record-setting pace of 58.3 per cent in February, but still enough to keep the city in the lead. Saskatoon housing prices rose 2.1 per cent between February and March. Builders reported higher prices as a re-

sult of increased material and labour costs, as well as a strong market and high demand for new housing, the StatsCan report stated.

Elsewhere in Canada, year-over-year growth in new housing prices slowed for a second consecutive month in March. This deceleration continues a downward trend that started in September 2006, due mainly to the softening market in Alberta. Nationally, prices rose 0.2 per cent between February and March.

Restore and Recycling Centre Expands to New Location

Habitat for Humanity's ReStore and Recycling Centre moved to a new, expanded location at the end of May, thanks to \$940,000 invested by the federal and provincial governments and the City of Saskatoon under the tripartite Saskatoon Urban Development Agreement.

The ReStore moved to the former Hub City Curling Rink at the corner of Avenue D South and 21st Street West.

The UDA funding was used to retrofit the former curling rink to current building stand-

ards for accessibility and fire protection systems, renovate office spaces, purchase and install shelving, and pave the adjacent parking lot. The new retail facility will have about three times more storage and administration space than the former store. Saskatoon's Habitat for Humanity contributed \$180,000 to the project, which will cost about \$1.12 million.

Habitat for Humanity will keep its location on Avenue L South for other recycling opportunities. Habitat for Humanity has formed partnerships with the Saskatoon Landfill and Regional Waste Management Association, the University of Saskatchewan and private industry to significantly reduce the

amount of waste going to the landfill. An additional 500 tonnes of waste is projected to be diverted from the Saskatoon landfill this year alone.

Conference Board Predicts More Growth for Saskatoon

A report from the Conference Board of Canada shows that the Saskatoon region's economic juggernaut showed no signs of slowing in the first quarter of 2008. Readjusted figures show that Saskatoon's gross domestic product grew by 5.5 per cent in 2007, and 2008's forecast has been lifted to 3.5 per cent.

"The Saskatoon economy is a driving force for growth in the province," said Alan Migneault, CEO of the Saskatoon Regional Economic Development Authority. "It is expected that the city region will outperform the current 2008 forecast given continued strength from sectors that performed well in 2007 and the actual results achieved in the first quarter of 2008."

According to the Metropolitan Outlook 1: Spring 2008 report, the Conference Board has adjusted some key numbers since the Winter 2008 report. The 2007 year-end GDP growth has been updated from 4.9 per cent to 5.5 per cent. Service sector output drove a majority of the growth, at 6.2 per cent, followed by the goods-producing sector at 3.7 per cent. Both sectors are forecast to grow at the same rate in 2008, with the goods-producing sector increasing in 2009. As well, the 2008 GDP forecast was adjusted to reflect Saskatoon's potential GDP growth from 2.9 per cent to 3.5 per cent.

Construction output in 2007

increased by 7.8 per cent, outpacing a five year average of 4.9 per cent. There were 2,380 units started in 2007, which accounted for the highest total housing starts since 1983; or a 59 per cent increase over 2006. Infrastructure projects made up most of the non-residential activity in 2007, with \$85 million in land development, and \$43 million in water and sewer development. The Conference Board has raised its 2008 housing starts forecast to 2400 units, equivalent to what was posted for 2007.

Home Construction Leads Home-based Business Growth

Most new home-based businesses in Saskatoon are residential construction firms. A report by the City of Saskatoon's development services branch states that of 225 new business licenses issued during 2007, 119 were for home-construction contractors.



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The city issued a total of 1,026 licenses in 2007, compared to 803 the previous year.

Most licenses, 345 in total, were for residential building construction. Plumbing, heating and air conditioning contractors were next, with 152 licenses, followed by electrical and other wiring installation contractors, with 80 licenses.

Provincial Building Permits Soar in First Quarter

The value of building permits in Saskatchewan for March 2008 recorded the second highest

percentage increase in the nation, Statistics Canada reported on May 6.

Building permit values totaled \$146 million, up 32 per cent from the \$110 million recorded last March (seasonally adjusted). Newfoundland and Labrador had a slightly higher increase than Saskatchewan, up 34.9 per cent over last March.

"The value of building permits jumped in March, up about one-third from last year, marking a significant leap in the province's construction activity," Enterprise and Innovation Minister Lyle Stewart said. "This remarkable surge is wide spread throughout the economy, at lev-

els which are near the top on a national basis."

There were also increases reported on a monthly basis, with permits increasing from \$112 million in February to \$146 million in March, a 29.7 per cent increase. This was the second highest increase amongst the provinces, with only Prince Edward Island posting a higher percentage increase at 41.8 per cent. The national average decreased by 4.5 per cent.

Saskatchewan's residential building permits were up year-over-year in March by 33 per cent from \$71 million to \$95 million. Non-residential permits were up by 30.2 per cent on the same basis from \$39 million in

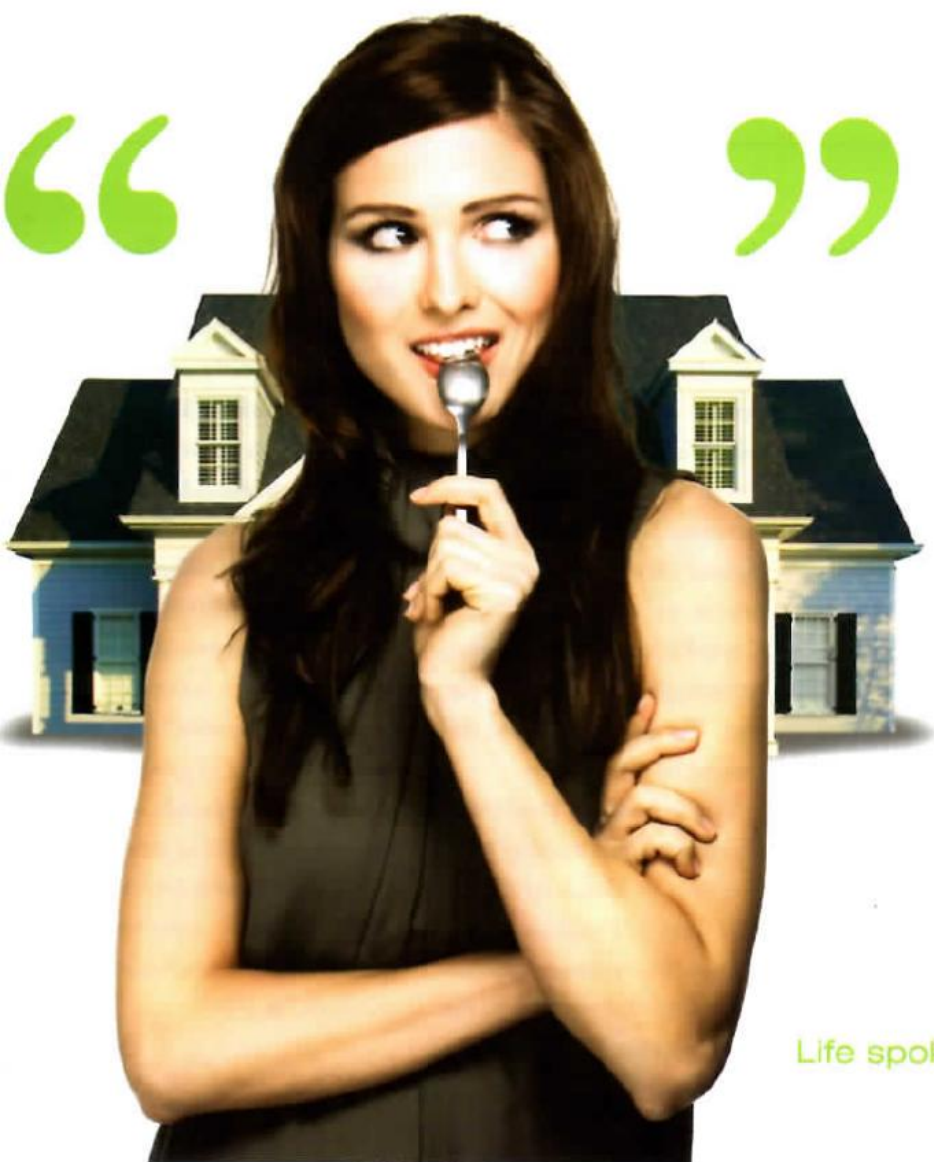
March 2007 to \$51 million in March 2008.

On a monthly basis, Saskatchewan's residential permits were up 12 per cent from \$85 million to \$95 million between February 2008 and March 2008. Non-residential permits were up 83.9 per cent from \$28 million to \$51 million in March 2008.

"One of the major indications of a hot economy is the level of construction activity," Stewart said. "This level of growth can only benefit the people of Saskatchewan, providing more job opportunities with better pay and benefits to improve the quality of life for families in the province." ■

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PROFILE

He Walks the Talk Green Developer Sees a Sustainable Saskatoon

Curtis Olson says a meandering path led to an interest in sustainable urban redevelopment and the remarkable transformation of an unused warehouse in the heart of Saskatoon's downtown.

He's always had an artistic bent, he says, spending the latter half of the 1990s as a musician touring with the band Five Minute Miracle.

An engineering physics degree from the University of Saskatchewan in 2004 took him and his wife, singer Carrie Catherine, to Victoria, B.C.. Olson designed wireless networks for Vecima Networks, but he found that urban redevelopment issues resonated more strongly than electronics design.

In Victoria, the couple lived in a downtown warehouse converted to apartments, close to the music venues, coffee shops and other amenities they loved.

"When we decided to move back to Saskatoon, the one thing we said was: in order for us to move back here, we would have to be able to reproduce that lifestyle that we had in Victoria — which does not mean the



weather. It means living in a walkable neighbourhood, having close access to restaurants and businesses and coffee shops, being close to the culture of the city."

Olson developed an interest in green residential housing, especially live/work housing.

The Fairbanks Lofts project gave him the opportunity he was looking for. His father, Peter

Olson, and uncle, Ian Stark, had taken on Saskatoon's first warehouse loft conversion. They invited Curtis to join them.

"That was an opportunity for me to get involved in urban redevelopment, to help create that lifestyle back in Saskatoon and to contribute to an innovative new project in the city," says Olson. "That's how we ended up being back in Saskatoon."

From musician to developer, Curtis Olson walked a meandering path from Saskatoon to Victoria and back. Inspired to create sustainable living spaces in Saskatoon's oldest neighbourhoods, Olson transformed the Fairbanks warehouse and is currently working on his new home, the Hay Loft in Caswell Hill.

He says the Fairbanks set a precedent for urban redevelopment opportunities in the warehouse district.

"Beyond just the bricks and mortar of how that building turned out, it became a statement for what could happen to the area and what could happen to downtown Saskatoon."

Sustainability, says Olson, is about creating an urban environment where people can find everything they need within their own neighbourhoods.

"When I was living in the Fairbanks warehouse, it was easier for me to walk downtown to Second Avenue, to go to the bank, to the Barking Fish or to a movie. It was easier for me to walk than it was to drive, just because I was so close to it.

"By being so close to those amenities, I'd probably eliminated about 80 percent of my transportation, compared to living out in, say, Fairhaven, Stonebridge or Hampton Village."

The same is true for Olson's latest project, the Hay Loft. It

was built as a Safeway grocery store in the early days of Saskatoon, later used as a convenience store and, finally, left disused except for storage. Olson is also renovating the building so that he and his wife can move in. It will be their home, their offices and a venue for house concerts.

"Because I'm doing it for myself, I'm not limited by what I think I can sell. My wife and I have designed a major prairie theme running through the house. There's going to be a barn, a Saskatchewan Wheat Pool grain elevator, and a Westeel Rosco grain bin integrated into the architecture of the interior of the house.

"By the time we move into our new place, our vehicular transportation will be next to nothing."

"By the time we move into our new place, our vehicular transportation will be next to nothing. The grocery store is right up on 33rd – it's very close to us – and downtown is a couple blocks away from us, too. In my mind, that is a very green, very sustainable method of living.

"I would say that sustainability underwrites everything that I look at in urban redevelopment projects, trying to get higher density, reusing old buildings, or building new but on unused land."

The city yards hold vast potential for sustainable development, says Olson.

"There's a huge amount of land there right now that's used for gravel and waste and fill for road base. People should be living there.

"It could be high density, very creative live/work types of developments, reminiscent of Yaletown in Vancouver. This is a huge opportunity that the city has."

Olson describes a renewed sense of patriotism among Saskatchewan residents, a pride that will foster redevelopment that exhibits a new and distinctively regional style.

"Vancouver has a very real signature to its urban landscape, with its condos and the way that they build out there," he says. "I think the same opportunity exists here, but it'll happen with the new buildings, the buildings that are built using today's technology, and today's ideas. With that renewed interest in the province and with the hot economy here, I think people are going to be willing to take more chances and be more creative and innovative with the structures they build. I can see that style or that statement coming down the pipe for the city right now.

"One project that I have a huge amount of respect for is the

Meridian Development project, the Hideaway," says Olson. "That's what sustainability is all about. They took four old run-down row houses, replaced them with something twice the density, built using new construction techniques. They're very energy-efficient. The sewer and water lines are already there. The roads are already there. There's no new parks that need to be built. It's piggybacking on what the city has already done, what the taxpayers have already paid for.

"The real innovation with that project was in the city zoning to allow that to happen and then getting the community support to make it happen. Meridian Developments set a precedent with that project and I think that is easily the most innovative one I've seen in the last few years."

Olson is helping organize a conference, Building Saskatchewan Green, being held in Saskatoon at the end of October. Past conferences were aimed at industry insiders, mainly architects and engineers, but the 2008 conference will include public events.

"When I think about sustainable things coming into the city, this conference is one of those very public events that's going to help to show people what's going on in the city, what's going on in their backyard. It's going to be a really phenomenal conference this year." ■



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The Three Rs of Interior Decorating

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Furnishings Make a Statement

It starts small, but sustainable practices are finding their way into more Saskatoon stores.



Increasingly, people are looking for ways to enhance their homes with furnishings and products made from sustainable or eco-friendly materials.

In exploring options available in Saskatoon, I was intrigued by some of the things I was able to find.

Consider the materials and processes that go into the products we use in our homes. Furniture such as tables and desks are created from wood or material like particle board. Couches and comfort chairs are built over frames, covered in fabrics and stuffed with padding. Other furnishings and accessories are made from ceramics, glass, wood, metal, cloth or plastics. All of these things can be made close to home or brought from halfway across the world. Wherever they come from, they can be made in ways that harm or help the environment.

Re-using is one of the best ways to go green. You're reducing energy that would be used to manufacture new products,

as well as raw material resources and transportation. Antiques and vintage furniture are directly recycled, and a great way to add to the decor of any home. There's a growing demand for reclaiming materials, especially wood from old flooring, cases, cupboards and doors, which are then transformed into new, modern or reproduction pieces.

Up Sheep Creek has an extensive collection of reclaimed wood furniture. Owner Heidi Petrar points out that many of the pieces are hand made, particularly those she imports from the Amish of Pennsylvania. Fin-

ishes done in milk paint create a traditional look and avoid the odours and off-gassing associated with more modern paints.

"The paint is really environmentally friendly," says Petrar. "It goes back to the old-fashioned way of making paint."

Before commercial paints became widely available, furniture builders mixed their own formulas from old curdled milk or cottage cheese, lime, clay and natural pigments. The result is a long-lasting, non-toxic coating that bonds with surfaces by forming a natural resin, calcium caseinate.

Another approach is to look for furniture made from fast-growing woods such as mango and bamboo and avoiding threatened species such as new teak, mahogany or materials harvested through illegal logging in countries known for their endangered forests.

Looking for independent standards is a good way to assure yourself that whatever you're buying was produced in a sustainable manner. Forest Stewardship Council certification guarantees that the wood came from a well-managed forest. A rigorous process ensures that mills, manufacturers and distributors around the world remain in compliance with the standards. The Sustainable Forestry Initiative forest conservation program, developed by the American Forest and Paper Association, similarly sets standards for sustainable forest management.

In our throw-away world, do we really need to be reminded that buying things that last will reduce the millions of tonnes of trash and garbage produced in Canada each year? Solid, well built furniture, including upholstered couches, can last two decades or more. The initial cost is more than offset by the longer life, plus the investment makes

it worthwhile to refinish or reupholster as the item shows its wear.

Wood is a very good choice for longevity, says Christine Giesbrecht, an interior decorator at Modern Country Interiors. Their wood furniture is crafted in Duncan, B.C., mainly from pine, maple and alder. The classic designs, many modelled after traditional Shaker styles, won't look out of place in any home.

"Even 15 or 20 years down the road, if it starts to show wear and tear, then it can always be refinished, instead of having to replace it," she says. "You always have that option of refinishing it and keep using it."

Accessories and accent pieces can also be durable. In decorating our homes, more of us are choosing natural, organic materials, such as cotton, jute or hemp. Amenity accents, available at Modern Country Interiors, are made exclusively from sustainable or organic materials. Accents de Ville has a line of jute carpets. Rug Studio's Custom Atelier rugs are hand-tufted in India using 100 per cent New Zealand wool or a combination of New Zealand wool and silk.

One principle of sustainability holds that it is better to buy products made closer to home, benefiting from the lower resource use required to transport to market. But there's another

side to that principle. Products made from salvaged materials, such as reclaimed wood furniture, still reduce our ecological footprint, wherever they are made. They also contribute to local employment and sustainable economies in parts of the world where they are produced. For example, one company has been reclaiming old teak oxen cart wheels and driftwood recovered from the 2006 tsunami that devastated Thailand. From this material, new furniture is built, creating local employment in the wake of the natural disaster.

While consumer interest in sustainable decor is gaining popularity in other Canadian

cities, it's still in its infancy in Saskatoon.

"It is becoming more popular and people want to do more for the environment," says Giesbrecht. "I think it is important for us as decorators to do more investigating." ■

The Details

Company: Up Sheep Creek
Owner: Heidi Petrar
Specialty: reclaimed wood and metal furniture, handmade accessories, artwork and gifts
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Company: Modern Country Interiors
Owner: Dave Shockey
Specialty: Pine, maple and alder furniture, custom kitchens, islands and bathroom vanities, housewares, linens and artwork
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STYLE

Green Light Energy-efficient Lighting Adds Style and Saves Utility Costs

If you're typical of most households, about 20 per cent of your energy costs go toward lighting your home. By switching to energy-efficient lighting, you reduce energy consumption, along with greenhouse gas emissions from power plants. Of course, you'll cut your electrical bill, too.

But there's more to sustainable lighting than electrical consumption. Manufacturers of efficient lighting also recognize that the materials used in their construction need to be environmentally friendly, as well. There are plenty of lamps made from natural, recycled or reused materials, including metal, glass, wood, felt and cloth. Some manufacturers offer recycling programs, taking back used lights so that they can be reused for the production of new ones.

We've all heard the hullabaloo encouraging us to switch our 150-year-old incandescent technology for compact fluorescent bulbs. Compact fluorescents are a simple, quick way to cut down on energy use and cost. The spiral design of-



Luminair Eco Desk 36 lamp, sustainable hardwood and ecologically made desk lamp incorporating an ultra-bright and highly-efficient Luminair 36 LED cluster light head in cool or warm white provides 1200 Lux at 0.50 metres. Photograph courtesy of Luminair Ltd.

fers reasonable efficiency (it projects more light outward than earlier CFL designs) in a small unit. But can you think of an uglier bulb?

Fortunately, CFLs are available in a wide range of styles and quality of light. In addition, there are other eco-friendly, efficient lamps and fixtures out there that can give you a remarkable array of options for enhancing the look of your home while you save the environment.

Compact Fluorescent Lamp

The average CFL uses about a quarter to a third of the energy of traditional incandescent bulbs and lasts 10 to 20 times longer, making it a good, convenient replacement for standard fixtures. Newer designs emit a warmer, more welcoming light.

They're available for indoor and outdoor use. It's getting easier to find them in different shapes and sizes, as well as versions that can be used in dimmer circuits.

Light Emitting Diodes

With recent improvements in LED technology, these tiny powerhouses of light are poised to set a new tone for style and efficiency in the home. Initially expensive, costs are coming down while their versatility expands. They're more efficient than CFLs, using about 10 to 20 percent of the energy of an incandescent bulb of equivalent brightness, and can last around 100,000 hours, about 10 years in normal use. They turn on instantly, providing their full brightness and colour right away. Fixtures come in a variety of styles, many with the bulbs

built into them, but there are also LED lamps designed to fit into existing incandescent or low-voltage halogen sockets. They're a great choice for adding accent lighting and unique colour to your decor.

Halogen Lamps

While technically a type of incandescent light, halogen bulbs combine a tungsten filament with halogen gas which helps the bulbs burn brighter and last up to three times longer. They're about a third more efficient than regular incandescent bulbs, so they'll still save you money and cut down on electrical costs. They produce a pleasing, white incandescent light, making them a good choice around the home when CFLs might not be suitable. Compact, low-voltage parabolic aluminum reflector versions are popular in track lighting, recessed lighting and task lighting.

Energy-saving Outdoor Lights

While CFLs, LEDs and halogen lamps are available in versions

for both indoor and outdoor use, the outdoor environment opens some new options and considerations. Solar-powered patio and garden lights are becoming popular. They assemble easily and quickly,

charge up their batteries during the day, then turn themselves on to light up the garden or pathway at night. Self-contained lights are usually powered by a pair of rechargeable AA batteries, which can be replaced, so don't be so quick to throw away the lights when they stop working.

Dark Sky Friendly

Light pollution from bad outdoor lighting wastes energy and robs us of our star-filled skies. Poor lighting on the exterior of your home can adversely affect not only your immediate neighbour, but also contribute to sky glow. Choosing dark sky friendly fixtures, bearing the International Dark-Sky Association's IDA-approved seal, ensures that you minimize glare, reduce light trespass and don't pollute the night sky.

Daylight

The best full-spectrum light is free, and it's right outside your window for most of the day. Natural daylight is good for your brain and body, so you may reap gains in personal energy as well



as save on electrical costs. Make the most of daylight by keeping your blinds open, or use sheer drapes to diffuse the light. If you're designing a new home or doing a renovation, plan to include south and east facing windows for catching sunlight and consider adding skylights or "light pipes" to channel natural light into your interior spaces.

Energy Saving Tips

- Turn off the lights when you leave a room. Fluorescent bulbs can waste energy and will have shorter lives when cycled through frequent on-off cycles. For standard incandescent bulbs, turn them off even if you leave the room for a few seconds. For compact fluorescent, turn them off if you leave for 3 minutes; and for standard fluorescent, turn them off if you leave for 15 minutes.
- Use motion sensors and timers to keep lights turned off when they're not needed, or turn them on only when they are needed.
- Use dimmer circuits to turn down the intensity of your lights. Dimmers are a great way

to change the quality of light and atmosphere of a room. You'll save energy, too, especially for incandescent and halogen lights. If you plan to put CFLs with a dimmer, make sure they are specially designed for that purpose. There should be

information on the packaging.

- Use natural light during the day. Open your drapes and rearrange your room to take advantage of natural light.
- Light-coloured walls make the best use of natural lighting, as well as reduce the amount of artificial light needed, by as much as 25 per cent.
- Switch to energy-efficient

bulbs. Use the lowest wattage lamp need for the task, but if your fixture takes more than one bulb you're better off to use a single high-wattage bulb than two of lower power.

■ Put the light where you need it. Task lighting not only lets you reduce your energy consumption, but also adds texture to light that can make a room more pleasing and welcoming. ■

Left: Luminair Re-Light eco-friendly lamp shades and table lamps are made from recycled plastic bottles. Available as a table lamp with integrated bulb holder and switch lead, or as individual shades for use with standard table and pendant lamp fittings.

Below: Luminair LED based light tube incorporates an ingenious, 360 microscopic prismatic lightfilm and colour-changing lightdrive. Photographs courtesy of Luminair Ltd.



GREENERY

A Gathering of Gardeners Community Gardens are Downright Neighbourly

It's not always easy to garden in the city, especially if your idea of gardening includes a crop of fresh vegetables. Some yards lack proper exposure for good gardens. In established neighbourhoods, mature trees block the direct sunlight that vegetables crave. Some people prefer to look out onto trees, shrubs and ornamental plants. Others like to use their gardens as outdoor living and entertainment space after a long winter. Apartment and condominium dwellers may not have space for any kind of gardening.

That's where community gardens come in. A community garden is simply a piece of land gardened by a group of people. It can be located on public land or on private property, managed informally or run through a non-profit organization.

"Community gardening is a very common occurrence elsewhere in the world," says Tom Wolf, a founder of the City Park community garden. "They just haven't made a huge splash on the prairies yet. They're starting to."



The City Park Community Garden is Saskatoon's oldest and most successful, established in 2004. It started from a modest 18 plots north of the former tennis courts in Wilson Park, growing to 42 last year, each plot ranging in size from about 100 to 250 square feet. The garden is managed informally.

"We're not incorporated," says Don Cook, one of the original gardeners and now coordinator of the City Park program. "We don't have any elections. It's just this loose group of gardeners, this initial group of people that organized it and invited other people to help."

Still, with a limited number of plots available, there are ground rules, including an application form.

"We have a gardeners' agreement that lays out the rules," says Cook. "People sign up and we just have some basic operat-

ing principles. We try to accommodate everybody.

"We advertise through our community newsletter. A lot of word of mouth happens between people. We put it on our sign. Essentially, it all happens within the neighbourhood."

The key to community gardening is, of course, community. You have to live in the neighbourhood. Local commitment makes for small, sustainable gardens throughout the city.

The city Parks Branch helps interested groups establish gardens in neighbourhood and district parks. Currently, there are two active community gardens established on city property, one in Leif Erickson Park in Westmount and the one in City Park, says Roxane Melnyk, parks program consultant for the City of Saskatoon. A garden in Charlottetown Park, behind the Cosmo Civic Centre, has

Since 2004, City Park Community Garden has brought the neighbourhood together in this corner of Wilson Park. The garden has now expanded into the area formerly used for the tennis courts. Photo courtesy of Tom Wolf, City Park Community Garden.

fallen inactive but a group of local residents is showing interest in bringing it back to life.

The branch also runs a popular Allotment Garden Program in the Westview neighbourhood, which the city rents out to cover its costs, says Kim Berge, superintendent of parks maintenance on the west side of the city. The 86 plots of 25 by 45 feet are available to any city resident. The city makes three plots available to the Child Hunger and Education Program (CHEP) at no charge, for their educational program.

An interesting twist to community gardening is a small number of median gardens planted throughout the city. The city has allowed small groups to grow flowers in the median strips separating traffic lanes on some wider streets. Safety's always a concern, with the potential of people crossing the street unexpectedly, and not everyone in a neighbourhood thinks gardens in medians look as nice as mowed grass. It can be a little harder to rally the community, so a garden's pro-

ponents have to work hard to gain consensus.

Homeowners on 29th Street are planting flowers and shrub beds, says Berge.

"On the 32nd Street centre boulevard, the neighbourhood put out little park benches and little flower beds," he says. Elsewhere, the city provided oak barrels to help a group of disabled people set up a container flower garden.

Along Victoria Avenue, high-rise residents organized a flower garden on the median strip in front of their building.

"That really took off when the bridge was closed," says Gerald Rees, superintendent of parks maintenance on the east side. "It's called Nutana Blooms. It's a nice premise and the reason there's so much gardening there is that there's a few condos and a highrise. All through Nutana three years ago, there was an initiative to put little pots and a garden."



Volunteer effort makes community gardens work.

"You really have to have dedicated gardeners first before you have a garden," says Wolf. "It's not a case of, 'if you build it they will come.' You have to have a core group of people who want this thing to succeed and who are prepared to garden there, and want to garden there badly. You have to have the people there first."

A community garden is more than about gardening. It's also about social interaction – neigh-

bour getting to know neighbours. City Park gardeners, for example, meet monthly for potluck dinners and barbecues.

"That's so the gardeners can meet each other and talk to each other," says Cook. "It's an activity at the garden."

"What attracted us was the vegetable gardening," says Cook. "Partially, what keeps us there is the social side. You get to meet your neighbours and other people. It is a nice neighbourhood activity to do on a summer evening, nice enough to do it frequently."

"For us it helps too, that there's a playground over there," says Donna Thiessen. We're usually over there with the kids anyway. We take 15 minutes, half an hour, to go to the garden. It works out as a really good situation."

"If I'm going for errand, I make sure I go that way and stop for a few minutes to check the garden out and then carry on."

"A lot of times, people will come by and bring their friends or relatives," she adds.

Left: Since 2004, City Park Community Garden has brought the neighbourhood together in this corner of Wilson Park. The garden has now expanded into the area formerly used for the tennis courts. Photo courtesy of Tom Wolf, City Park Community Garden.

Below: Neighbourhood-organized gardens, such as City Park Community Garden, brighten everyone's day. Community gardens are perfect for residents of apartment buildings and condominiums. Photo courtesy of Tom Wolf, City Park Community Garden.

"It brings different people to the park than would normally come to a park," says Cook. "There are a lot of seniors who I don't think would necessarily go for a walk to the park on a two or three day a week basis, who now have a reason to go there. Folks in apartments seem to be a big market for us. We have families gardening."

"The community garden is a really positive presence in the parks," says Cook. "Parks can become places where people are scared to go, because if they're not used then they attract people who don't want to be seen doing whatever they're doing – graffiti and vandalism and other activities that aren't really neighbourhood friendly and no neighbourhood wants. Putting legitimate people in the park for most of the fair weather seasons brings a presence to the park that's appreciated by the parks branch. It brings people to the park who wouldn't otherwise be there."

Getting people out to be active is a city objective, as well, she says. The community garden meets that in a way that or-





ganized sports doesn't meet. It reaches demographics that don't participate in organized sports. In other words, it isn't just about growing vegetables.

"Why wouldn't every neighbourhood have a community garden in the park?" asks Cook.

All it takes is people who want to do it and a willingness for the parks branch to allow that activity in a park.

"They serve a lot of neat functions," says Wolf. "You know, one thing it did for Don (Cook) and me – and many others – is it built us a community, it gave us a focal point of activity in the park, which we didn't have be-

Boulevard gardens, such as this one organized on Victoria Avenue's median strip by high-rise residents, add colour to the urban landscape.

fore. It beautified the space, so we could develop pride in that space. We met people we hadn't met before, learned things, developed different views on certain issues. It's been a fertile ground for all kinds of social things, not just growing food. But growing food is really cool, too, because eating fresh carrots out of your own garden is different than buying them in a bag. There's all kinds of really good things that come out of it." ■

Backstreet Secrets

Saskatonians will garden anywhere. Along the dusty, weed-edged back lanes of the city, you'll find shrubs, flowers and vegetables that didn't get there by accident.

"There's a few people gardening in alleys," says Gerald Rees, superintendent of parks maintenance for the City of Saskatoon. "There's a few guerrilla gardeners out there."

Although they may lack the political activism and furtiveness that characterizes dedicated guerrilla gardeners, technically, anyone expressing their green thumb in a back alley is encroaching on city-owned property.

The city doesn't see it as a problem – who could object to a patch of wholesome spinach or colourful marigold!

"Well, if they want to garden on an alley, that's fine," says Rees. "Just realize that there's a garbage truck going down there, and also people sometimes who might get into your garden. You don't want to make too many rules for people. They just have to be realistic."

LUXE



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SHOWCASE

Subtle Sustainability Solar Home Shines in Varsity View

It's not so much what you see, but what you don't.

When I went to meet Heather Trueman at the energy efficient house that she and her husband Gary Bortolotti built in 2005, I wasn't sure what to expect. I thought, shouldn't an energy-efficient house stand out in some way? Shouldn't it look radically different?

What I found was a home very much in keeping with the character of the Varsity View neighbourhood surrounding it.

The differences are subtle. To begin with, the walls — the outer envelope of the structure — are a little thicker: 12-inch thick, double-walled, two-by-four, R-44 construction designed to minimize heat loss. But perhaps the first thing that a guest would notice is how light and airy the interior feels. Large windows on the south walls, aided by piano windows on the east walls, not only brighten the great room, dining area and kitchen, but make the most of the passive solar design modifications built into the house. Sunlight streaming in during cooler months is absorbed into the concrete pad



beneath the manufactured hardwood floor, so the stored heat can be released later in the day. At warmer times of the year, awnings lowered over the windows keep the interior cool.

"One of the things I like to point out to people is the design of the windows and the window sills," says Trueman. "They're so deep because of the thicker walls. I really like the way John designed the windows. If you think about it, you've got all that light that can come into the room."

The only outward sign that the house uses energy differently from its neighbours is the 64 square foot hot water solar collector on the roof, visible

from the back yard. The heat captured by the unit is stored in two standard hot water tanks in the basement, then circulated through radiant in-floor heating coils, with enough left over for regular domestic use such as washing and showering. The system draws less power from the grid than a household light bulb, making the home's heating as cost effective as it is comfortable.

Trueman says it was important to complement the character of the older neighbourhood. Looking to the future, she also wanted a design that would accommodate living entirely on the main floor.

The open design of the living, dining and kitchen areas creates a wonderful space for entertaining. Artwork, "Dark Angel", by Miranda Jones.

"I was just looking for a house that had an appropriate layout and a facade that I liked," says Trueman. The goal was first to find a design they liked, then adapt it for energy efficiency and sustainability.

"I wanted it to look like it could have been a character home," she says. "There's enough variety of architecture in this older neighbourhood that it looks like an older house."

Trueman had to find the right builder. John Carroll of Carroll Homes has been building en-



ergy efficient homes since the 1970s.

"In terms of the interior space, John pretty much laid out the rooms and everything. He came up with the concept of the kitchen and we just made small adjustments. He not only thought about function, but he also has a very good sense of how a house works."

"I searched the Internet over and over for house plans that would work on a 35-foot lot and would give us that layout where we would be able to live on one floor. I took that plan and gave it to John, and he rearranged everything in the interior on the main floor. He changed a lot of things, for instance, the staircase going up the side and the two-storey entrance way."

Trueman and Carroll talked about the passive solar design. She didn't want to put in air conditioning, for instance, so there are no windows on the west side of the house because it's just going to gain heat in the summer.

"We've got lots of light coming in from the east," she says. "In the mornings it's just beautiful how it fills the room with light."

"It seemed to me that constructing a sustainable house would be difficult."

"It wasn't that hard," says Trueman. "Deciding to do it was hard. Finding a lot was hard. Doing the energy efficiency part of it really wasn't that difficult, particularly since John had the experience."

While energy efficiency was Trueman's primary consideration, it wasn't her sole focus.

"Of course, it mattered what sort of materials we were putting into the house," she says. "For the indoor environment we wanted good air quality."

A bungalow dating to the 1930s, but more recently used as a revenue property, had to be demolished and removed from the site. Trueman would have preferred to move the old building, but it had been allowed to run down. No one wanted to buy it, and moving it would have been too expensive. Every effort was made to reuse and recycle materials, but most had to be hauled to the dump.

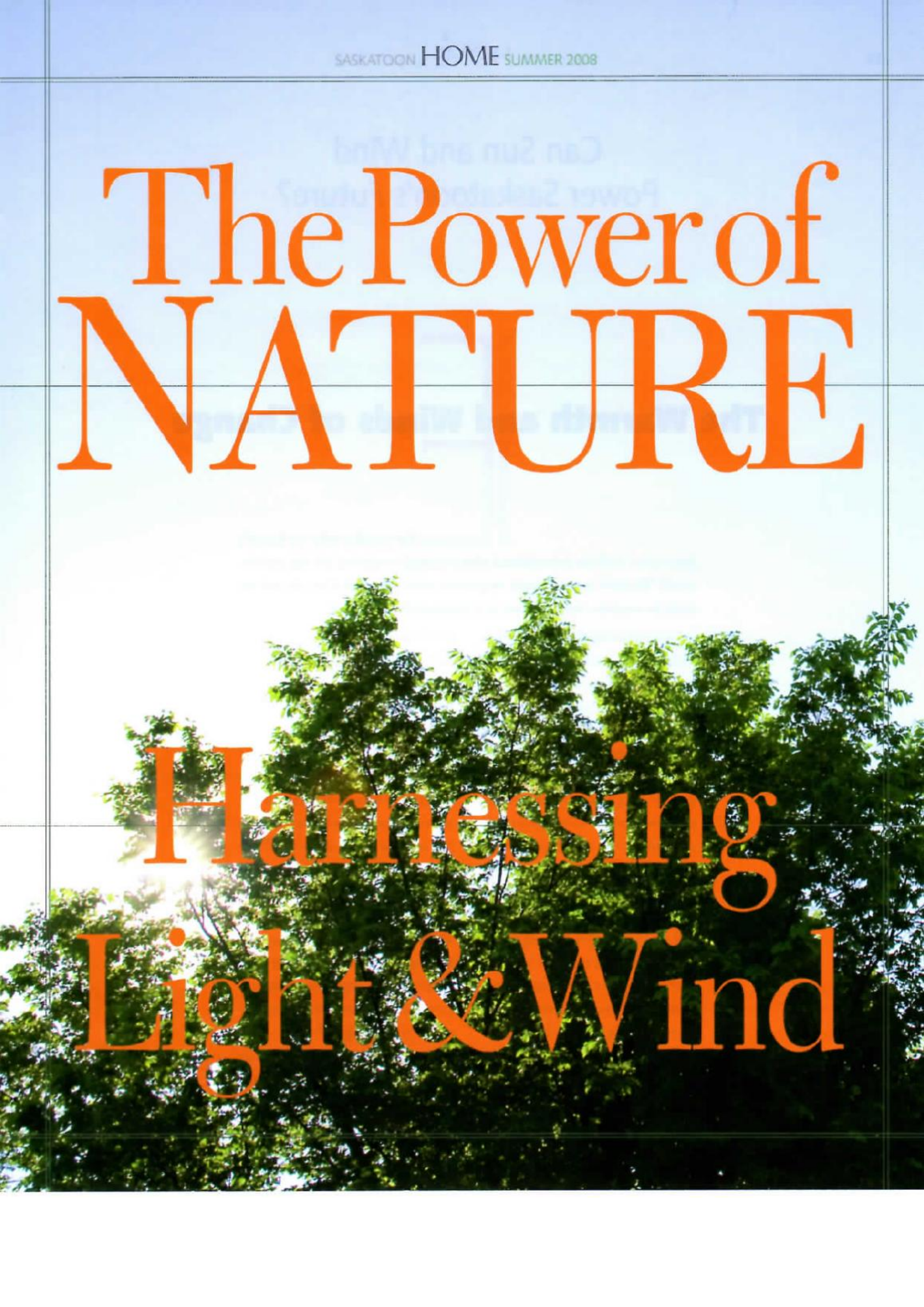
"There was very little that was salvageable," says Trueman.

Adaptable design: the front room can be converted to a bedroom, with an adjacent bathroom. North facing casement windows allow in plenty of natural light, while presenting a traditional facade to the street. Painting, "The Bored Meeting", by Miranda Jones.

"Everything else, it's all rubble that ends up at the landfill. It's a nasty feeling. Here we were building a house that's more sustainable but we still had to have that kind of impact."

"I remember watching them demolish it and it was kind of symbolic, because it was the beginning of our dream home, but we were tearing down what used to be somebody else's dream home." ■

The Power of NATURE



Harnessing
Light & Wind

Can Sun and Wind Power Saskatoon's Future?

The Warmth and Winds of Change

Ever wonder why we haven't done more with the most natural of our natural resources, the sun and the wind? We have more of both than most other places in Canada, yet we seem to consider them as more of a nuisance than an asset.

I was reminded of that one day last winter, when the lights in my office suddenly blinked off and the beeping of the battery backup warned me that I had only moments to shut down my computer before losing all my work. My first thoughts, whenever this happens, are always the same: will the power be out for only a few minutes, as usually is the case? Or will I need to think of preparations for preventing the house from freezing, like they say in those federal is-your-family-prepared advertisements? Never mind the lost productivity, I can't even go make a cup of coffee to enjoy as I wait for the power to come back on. It would be so reassuring to simply look out the window at the twirling blades of a

wind turbine in the back yard quietly ready to help out, or to know that the sun shining on the front of the house has stored a reserve to see us through a crisis.

It's not just for extremes of weather and utility failure that solar and wind could be of benefit. Natural gas and electricity prices are going nowhere but up, and as the costs of all our non-renewable sources of energy continue to rise, it makes a lot of sense to look for alternatives that would lower the expense of keeping a home. And, to be honest, for most people it is an economic matter, regardless of other arguments persuading us to do the right thing.

The average family in Saskatoon could get about 30 per cent of their

electricity from a small, affordable wind system. A retired couple living on their own could meet close to half their electrical needs that way. Solar heating could provide more than a third of a typical home's heating in winter.

Our houses aren't typically designed to take advantage of renewable energy, though. Over the years, we've followed trends in style better suited to warmer climates. We thumb through catalogues filled with plans created for the west coast or the deep south. Even so, those plans can be adapted with a little thought and without much difficulty to work with our prairie climate, rather than compete against it. Existing houses can be retrofitted to accept a few significant improvements, even if they can't adopt all the technologies available. Every little bit helps.

As recently as a couple of generations ago, our rural parents and grandparents understood the significance of adapting to make best use of the natural resources they had at their disposal. They oriented their homes to make the most of the sun and to avoid the wind. They planted trees to shield their homes from stormy winds, to maximize sun exposure in winter and to provide cooling shade in summer. Wind turbines, introduced by the 1920s, were providing light and power before the electrical grid became widely accessible. Before that, wind was harnessed mechanically to pump water from wells. Now, we look at abandoned windmills as nostalgic relics, yet the electric pumps that replaced

them can now be powered by the wind again. We put up miniature windmills to decorate our urban yards, unaware that it would be such a small step to harness the wind to light our homes.

People might be surprised to hear that there are some very good examples of renewable residential energy in Saskatoon. We've been at it since the 1970s and there are dozens of such places in the city. Houses using passive solar are virtually indistinguishable from their neighbours, except perhaps for the size and orientation of windows. It's the active solar collector on the roof or at back that gives the greatest hint of the home's efficiencies. A few homes have tiny wind turbines, but no one has erected the kind of system that would contribute to a substantial reduction in residential utility costs. Who would dare take such a chance in a city where neighbours can battle in court over wind chimes?

The day may not be far off, however, when commercial districts and industrial parks will try out such systems. For some time, we've been able to generate wind power vicariously, by buying into SaskPower's GreenPower program, Canada's largest wind energy project. If it proves feasible, Saskatoon could be producing its own wind power within a few years. Urban residents could already be using wind at their cottages, perhaps even profiting from net metering. Their contributions will lighten the load for the rest of us.

■ DARRELL NOAKES

The Power of



Shedding Light on Solar Energy in One of Canada's Sunniest Cities

Sunshine

"We cut our energy use down to about 150 kilowatt-hours a month, about a fifth of a normal household."

In ancient times, people believed the earth was shaped like a turtle. Creation stories link the turtle with the sun. Some describe its shell as a brazen sun.

As I watch our pet turtle stretching to capture the sun's warmth this summer, I can't help but wonder how long turtles and the sun have fascinated and inspired human civilization. Lately, it's occurred to me that turtles discovered solar energy long before we did.

We could learn a lot from turtles. We spend too much time retreating into the shells of our homes, closing off the sun. But like the turtle, most people understand that we only make progress when we stick our necks out.

Even on a cloudy day, this pair of hot water solar panels collects enough of the sun's energy to supply the heating and domestic hot water for a 3,000 square foot house. The small photovoltaic panel on the side runs the circulation pump.

A few Saskatoon residents have learned to stick their necks out, opening their homes to the sun and letting its rays provide warmth and energy.

When Angie Ortlepp and her family decided to build their new home near Pike Lake, they chose to make it a showcase for active and passive solar energy use. In fact, their experience inspired Ortlepp to establish a new company, Suncatcher Solar Homes.

Ortlepp is a professional engineer. Her husband, Bill Campbell, is a journeyman carpenter. Together, with their son, Rohan Campbell in charge of marketing, they realized that they were in a unique position to share their expertise and the techniques they learned.

"We've always been interested in using the sun's energy as much as possible in a home design," says Ortlepp. "About five years ago we bought an acreage near Pike

Lake and we thought, let's build the solar home we've been dreaming about. The idea was to use, first of all, a passive solar design that would use the sun's heat coming in through the windows to help heat the house. Also, we wanted to use stand-alone solar power, in other words, no connection to the grid."

"Once we had the house built, even as we were building it, there was so much interest that we realized that this is actually something we should be looking at as a business."

Business has been pretty good, too. Suncatcher has built homes throughout Saskatchewan, including an off-grid design near Craik, a town that has built a name for itself in sustainability. A hotel and an apartment building in Saskatoon have added solar hot water to substantially reduce the cost of their utilities.

Conservation is a key starting point. You don't want to waste the sun, so solar homes

start by being well-insulated and well-oriented on their sites. Passive solar design makes the most of sunlight entering through windows, so you don't want all that heat escaping back through the walls. Active solar uses hot water solar panels, for in-floor radiant heating and domestic hot water, or photovoltaic cells to run lights and appliances or to charge batteries. When all of these are combined into a single package, tremendous energy savings are possible.

"You can't really do solar hot water for 100 percent of your heating," says Ortlepp. "For one thing, our days are so much shorter in the winter time, which is when you need the heat the most. You need a fossil fuel of some sort as a backup."

Still, with just shy of 2400 hours of sunlight each year, Saskatoon is one of Canada's sunniest cities, so there is plenty of potential for solar energy.

Ortlepp says that solar hot water can provide about 50 to 60 per cent of an average household's needs year round, or about 35 per cent in winter and 80 to 95 per cent in the summer.

Add Other Energy Savings to the Solar ...

"For our house, we use all energy-efficient lighting and compact fluorescent bulbs. We've got a newer refrigerator. Lights are shut off when we're not using them. Computers are shut off when we don't need them."

Devices that run on remote control, such as the television and DVD player, consume standby or phantom power even when they aren't being used. The Ortlepps plugged them into outlets controlled by a switch ensuring they can be shut off completely.

Appliances that draw huge amounts of power, such as the electric stove, dryer and

hot water heater, were replaced with models using propane.

"We cut our energy use down to about 150 kilowatt-hours a month, about a fifth of a normal household," says Ortlepp. "We do all the same things that everybody else does. We're not doing without anything. We're not having to give up anything, except we're paying attention to our energy usage."

The house is powered by a single 920-watt solar power array, supplemented by a one-kilowatt wind turbine.

The system produces essentially all they need, about 90 to 95 per cent of their requirements, says Ortlepp. In the wintertime, they run a backup generator part of the time because the days are so much shorter.

Simple Solutions Make the Most of the Sun

Both building design and land design are important for getting the most out of the sun, says Jeannine Paul, owner of Nexus Solar. Before starting the company in 2001, she worked as a consultant in sustainable development, dealing with land use, water quality and habitat protection.

"Land is itself a resource that we can design and manage," says Paul, explaining that land can be developed so that buildings can have maximum exposure to the sun for heating and, conversely, how they may need to be protected from it for cooling. For example, she describes how one commercial development cut back on air conditioning costs.

"Along the south side of the building, they planted a whole bunch of mature trees. People could not believe that met the air conditioning load."

Residential subdivisions can be designed to give homeowners more frontage, which can improve privacy, increase the diversity of land use and accommodate buildings with

new uses such as granny suites or live-work units.

There are three steps to designing an energy efficient house, says Paul. First is siting, finding an orientation for a south-facing wall or roof. Secondly, make sure the house is airtight and well-insulated. Then, design for passive heating and cooling.

"Design is the most important thing you can do," she says. "You can easily get more than 50 percent of your heating and cooling and all your day lighting."

Purchasing energy should be the last thing on your list. A demonstration project being built in Spruce Home under CMHC's Equilibrium housing initiative shows how this can work.

The Net Zero house is designed to produce as much energy as it uses. It will still be connected to the power grid, however. Grid connected photovoltaic roof panels will operate with net metering.

"In our climate, the winter days are just too short and that's when we need the most appliances and lighting," she says.

To reach zero net energy usage, Paul says the first step was to minimize heating loads on the house, then aim for passive heating.

"You can do most of our heating and cooling with just windows, but you have to choose the windows. You can't have too many or too few. You want to avoid overheating, so we looked at an overhang. In summer it's shaded and in winter it's not. We get most of our heating that way."

"There's a myth out there about the cost," says Paul. "People just assume it's too expensive, without really knowing that it's not. This technology is not new."

"The nice thing is you can always start small. You can do small things. Why not run your solar fish pond instead of burning coal?" ■

RECLAIMING THE Night Sky



Unshielded lights create painful glare at night.

One thing I've always liked about Saskatoon is being able to sit in the garden at night and look up at the stars. When we moved here, the night sky was alive with points of light. There aren't a lot of cities where that's possible. Increasingly, it's becoming difficult to do that in Saskatchewan, especially during the past three or four years.

My most dramatic realization that we are losing our dark skies occurred late one summer day last year. Sitting out on the patio listening to the sounds of the night, I noticed that although the sky appeared black, I could see very few stars. I wondered if a long exposure on my camera would reveal their presence. Instead of stars, I captured a sickly orange aura that covered the city like a menacing fog. Sodium vapour streetlights, poorly aimed high intensity lamps and skyward-pointed architectural and advertising

lighting were scattering their light in a phenomenon known as "sky glow." Unnecessary squandered light had stolen our wondrous Saskatoon night.

How Light Steals the Night

We don't see the light because we no longer experience the dark. There's always some light at night. As daylight diminishes below a certain threshold, our night vision develops. But night vision is easily destroyed. Rhodopsin, the chemical in our eyes that's responsible for detecting light, is broken down quickly by that same light. It's a horrible Catch-22: we turn on a few lights so

we can see a little better, but find that we don't see as well as we thought we would, so we turn on more lights. We make our lights bright, then shine them in our eyes

and all around.

The light blinds us and scatters into the sky, with precious little falling where it could help us see. Glare, the kind of light we get from stylish acorn or barrel streetlights and irritating parking lot floodlights, is the worst. Installing brighter lamps in these fixtures, which typically is our response to such poor lighting, only multiplies the problem. Light spilling upwards brightens the sky, bleaching the photoreceptors in our eyes even when we are far away from the source, making us think it's darker than it actually is. Before long, we've lit up our spaces like it's daytime, but still we can't see where we're going.

To see better, we need to shut off lights that we don't need and make better use of

the lights that we do need. Fixtures that help us do that are readily available, but so too are bad designs.

Choosing the Right Lights

Richard Huziak is an astronomer and a member of Saskatchewan Light Pollution Abatement Committee of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada. He understands the problem, and the solution, better than most.

The rules are simple, he says. First, ask whether you need to install lighting at all. Then, if you do, keep it shielded and pointed downward, so that light is directed where it's needed and doesn't trespass onto others' property. Finally, consider whether motion sensors would help by reducing the duration of the light, saving on power and startling intruders.

"Every light should be considered in that way," says Huziak. "The first question, all the time, should be, why do I need the light in the first place?"

"If we were serious about energy savings and serious about the environment, then we need to do a good job on education, and we need to have recourse for getting rid of bad lights. The best way is not allowing them to be put up in the first place."

An Illuminating Drive Around Saskatoon

Touring around Saskatoon with Huziak on a springtime evening is an enlightening experience. There are too many examples of bad lighting, even in neighbourhoods trying to do the right thing.

Occasionally, we'd pass a house lit up like a fortress — although even fortresses and prisons are now adopting dark sky-friendly lighting schemes.

As we cruise along streets in The Willows and Stonebridge, the glare from vintage-looking acorn and other unshielded streetlights at times makes it difficult to see where we're going. Light, bright enough to read by, intrudes into people's yards and windows from fixtures that look charming during daytime.

"Exactly, that's why they were chosen," says Huziak. "There are period lights that look nice in the daytime that create no light pollution. It's a simply matter of choice. For every bad light, there is a good light that is made."

Newer houses tend to be built with soffit lighting, which does an excellent job of directing light, doesn't glare and prevents light trespass.

Among the best places to find good lighting are the trails and parks designed by the

Meewasin Valley Authority.

"I don't think they've ever erected a bad light in their recent history," says Huziak. "Gabriel Dumont Park, River Landing: the light couldn't be better. You can sure tell the difference between where the city lit and the MVA lit for River Landing."

"Everything is full cutoff, full shielded, that the MVA has done. Then you get one block back to where the city does the lighting, and you get the acorns."

At River Landing, all the lighting is dark sky friendly. Walkway lighting is waist height and points downward. Streetlights use full cutoff flat lenses. It's easy to see where you're going and there's no glare.

Bad lighting, in addition to destroying the night sky, wastes vast amounts of energy. Only three to 10 percent of light striking the ground is reflected back into the sky. That glow in our sky is caused almost entirely by light shining everywhere except where it does any good. It's estimated that between \$100 million and \$1 billion worth of energy is wasted each year in Canada shining our lights into space, says Huziak.

Take downtown Saskatoon, for example. In upgrading the look of our streets, the city opted for acorn and barrel fixtures in combination with the cobra-head streetlights we've seen since the 1960s. The traditional cobra design wastes light out the sides, but

It's estimated that between \$100 million and \$1 billion worth of

none out the top. Acorns waste their light out the sides and top. The barrel fixtures have a reflector that helps disperse light downwards, but it's unshielded and most of the light goes out the sides and top. The new streetlights were installed with 75-watt lamps on the lower fixtures and 150-watt lamps on the top, but Huziak says there wasn't enough light reaching the ground, so now all the fixtures have 150-watt bulbs. At the same time, the upgrade increased the number of lights from eight per block to 24.

"So they're using far more lights than they used to use and they're using far more power than they used to use because the lights look good in the daytime," says Huziak. "They shine in everybody's windows now. On 25th Street, when they did that upgrade there, in one year they had a thousand complaints about the lighting."

The city's newest west side subdivision, Hampton Village, is a showcase of dark sky design and construction. The neighbourhood is lit using pollution-free, full-cut-off, flat-lens, high-pressure sodium fixtures, a design adopted in Calgary. Saskatoon's light pollution experts worked with the developer to ensure that household lighting was also dark sky friendly.

But as Huziak and I approach this model subdivision, I'm wondering if it's a joke. Heading up Junor Avenue, it's like staring

into the sun. The arterial street lighting glares so harshly that it's actually hard to see the roadway.

"This is the best and the worst all in one spot," says Huziak. "We've got all these acorns out here, completely out of character for a dark sky neighbourhood. They're four times the density of normal lighting, unshielded, completely polluting, high maintenance lights."

Then, once we get into Hampton Village, it's literally like night and day. I can barely see the streetlights, yet the ground is bright. Sidewalks are lit, yet yards and the fronts of all the houses are dark. There's a serenity in the air. I suddenly feel as if the light we're accustomed to in the city creates an awful din, and the darkness in this neighbourhood creates a silence you can touch.

"These (streetlights) produce zero light pollution," says Huziak. "They meet all the international standards for roadway lighting. They have a better lifetime, better ballast than the old cobra heads. You can see the whole neighbourhood is lit up, but you can't see the light."

On a moonless night, from the middle of this neighbourhood, you can actually see the Milky Way. ■

Shutting off Light Pollution

Light pollution, essentially, is light that shines where it's not needed or wanted. For example:

- light shining off your property onto your neighbour's.
- light shining onto your property from elsewhere.
- glaring light.
- light shining up into the sky.

Responsible lighting:

- Decide if it's necessary.
- Direct the light only where it's needed.
- Use only as much as needed.
- Control the spectral response (filter out harmful wavelengths).
- Use timers and motion sensors.

Many local lighting suppliers stock dark-sky friendly fixtures, certified by the International Dark-Sky Association.

More information:

Saskatchewan Light Pollution:

www.ras.sk.ca/lpc/lpc.htm

International Dark-Sky Association:

www.darksky.org

National Light Pollution Abatement Committee:

www.rasc.ca/light



energy is wasted each year in Canada shining our lights into space.

Be...part of the

Experience it ...and enjoy! - by Linda Epstein

Take a closer look at Saskatchewan's largest city, and you will not only see, but feel the excitement. There is something for everyone in this urban oasis. Caressed by the South Saskatchewan River, Saskatoon provides a variety of easily accessible activities and experiences. Visitors in the tens of thousands each year are treated to great restaurants, dining, shopping, theatre, culture, gaming, concerts, sports, exhibits and festivals.

Whether a tourist is in Saskatoon to visit friends and relatives, to attend a conference or an event, to shop, or is using Saskatoon as a base for visiting throughout the area, he or she is looking for a positive experience. Tourism Saskatoon is able to identify places to eat, stay, shop, and enjoy the full experience that is Saskatoon. It has literature and marketing tools to help inform the tourist and/or the Saskatonian. Helpful travel counselors are on hand to assist in planning fun city getaways, or a special day.

In addition to visitor services Tourism Saskatoon assists with leisure marketing, encourages good will, and advocates for high-profile conferences and events. Its specialists can inform event planners, and can assist with bids, planning and data collection. If it impacts the tourism industry, it is likely that Tourism Saskatoon can lend a hand. That includes marketing for Saskatoon Sports Tourism (which it manages), and the cultural sector. Check out its helpful website, which highlights member businesses and upcoming events.

Saskatoon is developing into what all cities should aspire to – a healthy blend of cultural character, business and good environment.

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For more information,

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Create new memories. To find out what others have already discovered, visit tourismsaskatoon.com for great get-aways, or call 1-800-567-2444 ext 29 to talk with one of our friendly travel counsellors.

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rides at the EX... fireworks before bed



Here's what's cooking this summer!

Calendar of Major Events:

June 4-7 Saskatchewan Children's Festival

June 6-7 Broadway Art Encounter

June 20-22 National Aboriginal Day
Celebrations

June 20-29 SaskTel Saskatchewan Jazz Festival

July 1 Canada Day Celebrations

July 2-Aug 10 Shakespeare on the Saskatchewan

July 6 Saskatoon Pets in the Park

July 12-13 Pion-Era

July 13-20 Can Am Police Fire Games

July 17-20 Ness Creek Music Festival

July 15-20 A Taste of Saskatchewan

July 31-Aug 9 Saskatoon Fringe Theatre Festival

August 1-3 Super Run 2008

August 5-10 Saskatoon Exhibition

August 7-10 John Arcand Fiddle Fest

August 7-10 Ebon Mid Summer Masters Horse Show

August 14-16 Folkfest

August 22-24 Rock 102 Cruise Weekend

August 23 Ukraine Day in the Park

August 30-31 Saskatoon Fireworks Festival

September 6 Broadway Street Fair

September 25-28 Flicks International Film
Festival for Young People

September 26-28 New Holland Saskatoon
Stampede Pro Rodeo

Mid October Reflections of Nature

October 24-26 Pet Expo

November 11 Remembrance Day Ceremonies

November 13-15 Saskatoon Fall Fair

November 14-16 Saskatchewan indemand

November 16 Santa Claus Parade

November 21-Jan 11 SIGA Enchanted Forest

November 23-29 Saskatoon City Hospital
Festival of Trees

December 5-7 Sundog Handcraft Faire



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Will It Work in Saskatoon?

WIND POWER

Sticking a 10-foot propeller on a 50-foot pole in your back yard might not sit well with neighbours who don't necessarily share your enthusiasm for saving the planet.

Most people already know that they can purchase wind power as part of their utility package, paying a small monthly charge of \$2.50 for every 100 kilowatts of electricity from 116 turbine units churning away in three huge wind farms near Swift Current and Gull Lake.

Large scale wind energy involves a more costly investment than non-renewable sources such as our province's coal generation facilities. That may change in the future, as the cost of conventional generation rises and "alternative" generation falls. For now, if you want to go "green" in the energy department, you have to pay a price, even if it's

small one. Think of it as investing in a better future.

Saskatchewan currently produces 172 megawatts of electricity from the wind, about five percent of total generation, which is the highest provincial output in Canada. Coincidentally, it's about the same amount of power that disappears through normal transmission losses, an unavoidable result of having to generate our electricity so far from where we consume it. Transmission losses occur regardless of how our electricity is generated, but what if we could generate it closer to home, say, at our own back doors?

Raum Energy, a Saskatoon-based wind

energy company that designs its own wind turbine systems, currently manufactures a 1.3 kilowatt system and plans to introduce a three kilowatt model to be released next spring.

To get a sense of scale, consider that you'd need more than a thousand of the smaller units to get the output of just one of the 83 gigantic turbines at SaskPower's Centennial Wind Power Facility southeast of Swift Current. But with just 1.3 kilowatts of power, you'd still get enough to offset the electrical cost of an outdoor hot tub on your patio, from a device not much bigger than your microwave oven. Aside from the initial cost, about \$6,000, all the electricity you produce is free — better than free, in fact, if you take advantage of the provincial government's net metering program which lets you pump electricity back into the grid and get paid for it.

While Saskatoon winds do not blow as consistently and strongly as in the province's southwest, we do get pretty respectable winds here. Near Swift Current, for example, a 1.3 kilowatt system would produce about 4,000 kilowatt-hours of electricity per year, says Darryl Jessie, president of Raum Energy. Winds around Saskatoon would get you about 2,500 kilowatt-hours.

"An average home uses about 8,000 kilowatt-hours a year," says Jessie. "On a good site towards the south of the province, you'd get about half of that out of our machine. Let's say you're two empty nesters and you only use 6,000 kilowatt-hours. You'd be getting close to three-quarters of your power (from wind). You're looking at around 30 percent of an average home's use here (in Saskatoon)."

Wind turbines could be a tough sell in the city, though. For one thing, the idea of sticking a 10-foot propeller on a 50-foot pole in



your back yard might not sit well with neighbours who don't necessarily share your enthusiasm for saving the planet. Systems designed for residential use comply with height and safety regulations, but the city's noise bylaw is sufficiently broad that even the slightest whisper from a device that makes less noise than rustling leaves could still be enough to get you shut down.

More importantly, urban wind is turbulent. Like a pot of boiling water, air bubbles and twists as it undulates over rooftops, swirls around high rises and gets lost in trees that can be taller than most allowable wind towers. Energy potential is dragged down by such surface roughness, disturbing and slowing the wind to the point where the turbines aren't useful or economical. In addition, very small units, those in the 200 to 400 watt range commonly available at hardware stores and specialty businesses, tend to be mounted at lower heights, where winds are weaker. Such turbines mounted on the outside walls of houses can induce vibrations that are at the least annoying to occupants and potentially damaging to the structure, especially to masonry. All in all, you might think that it adds up to a pessimistic outlook for small domestic wind turbine use within city limits.

All is not lost, however. Wind turbines work great outside the city, where wind can

blow unconstrained and your nearest neighbour is too far away to be affected by anything you do. They hold tremendous promise for those living on acreages and city residents looking to cut down on the cost of operating a seasonal cottage (connected to net metering, your cottage would be earning money for you during your absence). Within urban industrial parks, where taller towers and larger turbines would be both per-

missible and feasible, the problems affecting residential neighbourhoods would largely be absent. Adjacent to schools, where playgrounds would provide more than adequate separation from even the most sensitive of neighbours, wind turbines would reduce the cost of running our education system while providing lessons in responsible energy use far better than having your mother tell you to remember to turn off the lights.

"Schools are a great avenue for it," says Jessie. "You're training your children to become accustomed to green energy. So often, we take things for granted. We walk into a room, we flick our light switch. But if you walk out of your school and see the turbine turning, you know that power's going into your school and you're using it somewhere. At night, you're hundreds of metres from homes, so it shouldn't be a problem for complaints."

What this means for the average citizen is that although you might not have a wind turbine in your back yard, encouraging small scale wind energy production still lowers the overall draw of electricity from non-renewable sources. We make a monumental reduction in our environmental footprint through a series of incremental improvements, instead of looking for a single, big fix. ■

Three Extraordinary Choices with Your Lifestyle in Mind

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A brand new west-side community offering affordable housing options.



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THE ROOM

Young and Green Sustainability Starts in the Nursery

More than ever, caring for your child means caring for the environment. Today's nursery furnishings and decor not only use formaldehyde free, zero-VOC, non-toxic materials and finishes, but are also manufactured using sustainable practices.

Longevity may be the least discussed and most neglected element of a sustainable lifestyle. Choosing furniture to last through your child's growth and adapt through the teenage years and beyond may be one of the most important decisions you

Top: There's value in sustainability, built to last. Innovative baby furniture grows with your family. The Stokke Sleepi crib, \$949.00, converts to a toddler bed. When your child outgrows it, the bed splits into a pair of matching bistro chairs, suitable and stylish enough for any adult. Also shown: Dwell Cashmere/Silk Blanket (hanging over crib), \$126.00; Dwell Stacking Rings (on shelf), \$39.00; Dwell Boudoir Pillow (in cowgirl/western motif, on shelf), \$39.00; Dwell Stroller Blanket (in cowgirl/western motif, at left), \$46.00. Furnishings and decor by Two Little Birdies Baby and Toddler Boutique. Photography by Amanda Sakundiak, Dream Photography.

Bottom: The Stokke Care change table converts to a student desk, \$569.00. Furnishings and decor by Two Little Birdies Baby and Toddler Boutique. Photography by Amanda Sakundiak, Dream Photography.





can make for a sustainable future. It isn't unusual now to see manufacturers abandoning short-lived, throw-away products in favour of nursery decor meant to last a lifetime.

Wood products, especially Forestry Stewardship Council-certified furnishings and accessories, are durable and stylish. Many manufacturers make their products with approved woods, ensuring that the forests will still be around long after your children have families of their own.

Clothing made from natural textiles feel better on young skin. They're also environmentally-compatible, especially when created using sustainable methods, complying with interna-



tional standards for safety.

Blankets, bedding, pillows and accessories are also made from organic materials.

Many companies, such as Cariboo Earth, specialize in creating baby products for environmentally-conscious parents, using natural fibres, handcrafted



woods and water-based, biodegradable finishes.

Sometimes, plastics can't be avoided, so make sure you choose manufacturers that recycle and encourage recycling. Regulations limit the use of chemicals in plastics intended for children. Obviously, bottles, toys, straps and buckles will be BPA (Bisphenol-A) and PVC (Polyvinyl Chloride) free, but you can also look for manufacturers committed to using minimal plastics and exceeding safety standards.

Thinkbaby and other companies also support environmentally positive non-profit programs such as Healthy Child Healthy World. ■

Top left: The Stokke Tripp Trapp highchair, with adjustable footrest, converts to a youth chair, then to a regular chair to accommodate an adult. \$289.00 Solid wood construction means that your child's furniture will last for years and years. Furnishings and decor by Two Little Birdies Baby and Toddler Boutique. Photography by Amanda Sakundiak, Dream Photography.

Top right: Dwell Diaper Bag, \$169.00; Dwell Cashmere/Silk Blanket, \$126.00. Furnishings and decor by Two Little Birdies Baby and Toddler Boutique. Photography by Amanda Sakundiak, Dream Photography.

Left: Dwell Stacking Rings, in cotton corduroy, \$39.00. Furnishings and decor by Two Little Birdies Baby and Toddler Boutique. Photography by Amanda Sakundiak, Dream Photography.

Two Little Birdies Baby Boutique
260-2600 8th St E, Saskatoon,
S7H0V7 Ph: 665.0533
Dream Photography
Ph: 241.0660

SPOTLIGHT

A Living Model of Sustainable Living

Rivergreen
Ecovillage Takes
Environmentalism
Mainstream

These days, people are taking a more active interest in their ecological footprint, the balance between our demand for natural resources and the earth's capacity to regenerate them. It's a worldwide concern that has led to the development of socially, economically and ecologically sustainable communities known as ecovillages.

Saskatoon's first such community, Rivergreen Ecovillage, is still some ways to completion, but is already beginning to take shape.

The Rivergreen Ecovillage at Saskatoon's River Landing Phase II grew out of Road Map 2020, a movement to create a more sustainable Saskatoon. Road Map 2020 began in 2004 as a partnership of the Meewasin Valley Authority, Saskatchewan Environmental Society and City of Saskatoon's Environmental Advisory Committee.

"We were looking at all kinds of great things that were going on in the city and great ideas around the world," says



Rivergreen co-manager Paul Hanley. "It seemed like the time was right to do this here. We realized that this was a popular idea."

He says community is important to people and they can be more connected with their neighbours. The idea of this village was created with people working and living in the same place.

"You're close to the downtown, close to the services and entertainment, trails and recreation, all kinds of things. You have a chance to do a lot more without using your car."

The mixed-use condominium development includes market housing, affordable housing and retail/commercial space. The planned 65 residential and 10 commercial units are designed to support a commu-

nity of about 150 people. It sits on a one-block parcel of formerly single-detached residential property, south of 19th Street between Avenues B and C, directly west of the farmers' market and north of the city's new Isinger Park adjacent to the river bank.

Plans include a four-storey apartment building, two and three storey townhouses, and retail space across from the farmers' market. The design makes the most of the site's orientation to the sun, permitting both passive and active solar heating and natural lighting. A large central courtyard creates a private setting for the community, with wide passageways to create linkages to surrounding neighbourhoods.

"What we're trying to do is make sure that we've got as

The mixed-use development plan includes retail and commercial space. As a sustainable community, Rivergreen is within easy walking distance of shopping, entertainment and recreation, is situated on transit routes and incorporates alternative transportation options. Illustration courtesy of Rivergreen Ecovillage.

much density as we can put on the site reasonably and still leave enough open space and green space for people to have adjoining space," says co-manager Rick Olmstead.

"There's going to be a lot more people in that neighbourhood as it evolves, too," says Olmstead. "As other pieces of land are built on, within phase two of River Landing alone, there's going to be quite a few hundred people living there. That will create an even larger community to help support things like a small grocery store."

"We've known how to build better buildings for a long time," he says. "There's no real magic to it. It's really now just more of a mainstream issue. We need to build buildings that use less energy."

"We're really building a much better envelope, and that's the key thing. It's like putting on a better jacket on a winter's day. You're simply going to be warmer. The building envelope becomes key to a lot of your en-

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energy focus on the project. That better envelope, in terms of the walls, the windows, the air sealing, the detailing that goes with it, just creates a building that uses much less energy to start with. Once you've conserved all that energy, now you need much less energy to heat and cool and to manage the rest of the building."

Rivergreen will also conserve on water consumption, whether for domestic use or for storm runoff management, says Olmstead. It goes without saying that low-flow toilets and shower heads will be part of the development, but so too are techniques to capture and re-use rainfall for landscape watering and to slow surges that customarily occur with storms.

Rooftop terraces, part of the site's green roof design, will manage rainwater runoff from the buildings, help manage summertime heat and provide an aesthetic environment for tenants.

"We want to make sure that recycling is integrated into life at Rivergreen," says Olmstead.

"Every condo unit will have a recycling centre. Every floor will have places for recycling. There will be a central composting facility on the site.

"We're targeting LEED platinum, which is the highest level



Although the exact design is still to be determined, this artist's rendering shows how Rivergreen Ecovillage will develop in harmony with the River Landing concept. A four-storey apartment complex on the north side of the property and shorter buildings to the south make the most solar heating and natural light. Illustration courtesy of Rivergreen Ecovillage.

of LEED accreditation and we think we can achieve it," says Olmstead. "The LEED accreditation system qualifies the building in its entirety. It's not just about the energy. It's about the materials that are in the building, the water use, the recycling that's done on site, the management of materials onsite."

Project architect Paul Blaser, from Rajani Blaser Mannix Architecture, developed the concept design. LEED specialist Murray Guy of Integrated Designs Inc. is project manager for Rivergreen. The Caleb Group is construction manager for the project. Seed money for the project has been received from Saskatchewan Environment, a Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Saskatchewan's Office of Energy Conservation, and the Meewasin Valley Authority. ■

TIPSHEET

Gifts of Green These Programs Give You Money to Save Energy

It may seem too good to be true, but there are government agencies and other organizations out there who will actually pay you in one form or another to move towards sustainability. Besides getting out-and-out grants, you can get rebates, tax exemptions, extended amortizations and even loan reductions.

Tax-Exemptions and Rebates on Energy Star Purchases

Energy Star qualified furnaces, boilers and heat pumps are exempt from PST, as are energy-efficient household appliances, including refrigerators, freezers, dishwashers and clothes washers. For information, visit the SaskEnergy website saskenergy.com/saving_energy, or call 1.800.667.6102.

Net Metering

Net metering lets your power meter run "backwards" whenever you put more electricity into the grid than you take out, such as when you are running wind or photovoltaic systems in addition to your traditional



methods. You get billed for the net difference between the power you buy from the grid and sell back to it. The Saskatchewan Research Council will pay 25 per cent of costs for you to convert to net metering. Up to \$25,000 of funding is available for any project with generating capacities up to 100kW. Of course, you need

permission from SaskPower or Saskatoon Light and Power before you begin. Eligible costs may include compliance inspections, interconnect studies, meter installations, data logging equipment, interconnection fees, costs associated with permits, and equipment purchase and installation. Wind turbine and solar photovoltaic systems,

as well as other generation technologies are eligible. For more information, visit the SRC website, www.oec.ca/html/funding/net_meter or call 1.306.933.6431.

SaskPower: www.saskpower.com/poweringyourfuture/opportunities/net_metering.shtml
1.888.SKPOWER
(1.888.757.6937)

Saskatoon Light and Power: www.saskatoon.ca/org/electrical/power_producers.asp or 1.306.975.2414

Saskatchewan EnerGuide for Houses

The Saskatchewan EnerGuide for Houses retrofit grant program provides provincial grants up to \$5,000 for energy efficient upgrades. To qualify, homeowners are required to have energy audits done before and after these improvements. Various grants are available including for heating, cooling, ventilation and hot water upgrades, better insulation, water conservation measures, and replacing doors, windows and skylights. In addition, homeowners who qualify for the Saskatchewan program may also qualify for the federal Eco-Energy Retrofit Initiative, which is a similar concept. The maximum grant is \$5,000 from each the federal and provincial con-

tributions. Information is available on the SaskEnergy website, www.saskenergy.com/Saving_Energy/energyguide.asp or by calling 1.800.567.8899.

The program is delivered in Saskatchewan by:
Sun Ridge Group
www.sunridgegroup.ca,
1.800.667.3700.
AmeriSpec
www.amerispec.com,
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Energy Wise Solutions
1.877.787.4328

Eco-Energy Retrofit Initiative

The Eco-Energy Retrofit Initiative, administered by Natural Resources Canada, provides fi-

nancial incentives for retrofitting houses and other buildings, and industrial processes. This program includes installation of solar energy systems. A \$500 federal grant and \$1,000 provincial grant are available for installation of solar domestic hot water systems. Information is available at www.ecoaction.gc.ca or call 1.800.0.Canada (1.800.622.6232).

CMHC Programs

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation offers mortgage loan insurance premium refunds of 10 per cent and extended amortization periods of up to 40 years to purchase an energy-efficient home or make

energy-saving renovations. For more information, visit the CMHC website, www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/co/moloin/moloin_008.cfm, or call 1.800.668.2642.

Credit Union Rebates

Affinity Credit Union's former FirstSask Credit Union branches offer a \$250 rebate on qualifying loans for energy efficiency improvements. For more information, visit firstsask.ca or call 1.306.934.4000.

Energy Star and R-2000 Programs for New Homes

The Energy Star for New Homes Initiative promotes energy efficiency to make new homes about 30 percent more energy efficient than conventionally built ones. To qualify, contact an Energy Star licensed builder.

The R-2000 standard sets strict technical requirements that a builder must follow for energy efficiency, indoor air quality and environmental responsibility. For information, contact your builder.

Saskatchewan residents who build or purchase a newly constructed Energy Star qualified or R-2000 certified home are eligible for rebates of \$1,000, plus an additional \$1,000 for solar domestic hot water, \$150 for drain water heat recovery, and \$100 for one qualifying natural gas appliance or \$250 for two appliances. Qualifying

natural gas appliances include clothes dryers, barbecues, cooktops and ranges.

Share the Warmth Home Energy Efficiency Project

The SaskEnergy Share the Warmth Home Energy Efficiency Project is a community program offering assistance to low income households to help reduce their energy costs. SaskEnergy, Salvation Army and SIAST volunteers help up to 500 homeowners in 12 cities, including Saskatoon. Anyone can apply, but preference is given to households with incomes below \$45,000. Renters who pay all their utility bills may be considered. For more information, call SaskEnergy's Saskatoon liaison at 1.306.975.8573.

Saskatchewan Home Energy Improvement Program

The Saskatchewan Home Energy Improvement Program for low and moderate-income homeowners provides financial assistance for energy retrofits such as heating systems upgrades, tankless hot water heaters, insulation and draft proofing. For more information, visit the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation website at www.socialservices.gov.sk.ca/sheip, or call 1.866.388.8433.



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PRACTICA

Simple and Savvy

Basic Steps to Save Energy at Home

Even with Saskatoon's red-hot housing market breaking records, we're not all going to tear everything down and replace it with the latest in sustainable technologies. There are many simple and practical things we can do to make our homes greener and leaner.

A simple first step is replace the obvious energy wasters around the house with more efficient products. Swapping incandescent lighting with energy-conserving fixtures and bulbs is an inexpensive solution that is quick to implement.

The federal EnerGuide program helps consumers purchase the most energy-efficient equipment on the market. Look for the EnerGuide label on new appliances. If your refrigerator, stove, dishwasher, washer and dryer don't have the label, it's probably time to consider updating these appliances. Older appliances with the label may be superseded by newer ones that are even more efficient. The savings can mount up.

The EnerGuide program also applies to heating, ventilation and air-conditioning systems. Updating to a newer, high-effi-

dends quickly, but only if you aren't wasting energy in a drafty and poorly insulated house.

We've all heard that turning down your thermostat at night, during periods when you are away from home or when you are more active in the house, will help save energy. Savings of 10 per cent are common, so if you can't remember to turn down the thermostat on your own, consider buying a programmable model that does the remembering for you. You can occasionally find rebates and incentive programs to make it really worth your while.

Products bearing the Energy Star logo are significantly more energy-efficient than current federal standards. For example, Energy Star central air conditioning systems exceed existing federal standards by at least 20 per cent, while furnaces with the logo exceed minimum stand-

As long as you're thinking about your electricity use, consider taking some of the money you've saved and putting it into other energy conservation efforts. Whether you're a SaskPower customer or are in the Saskatoon Light and Power service area, you can subscribe to the province's Greenpower program, buying electricity generated by SaskPower's wind generation facilities in southwestern Saskatchewan. Each block of 100 kilowatt hours costs \$2.50.

A home retrofit can be expensive, but worthwhile. An older home can be upgraded to newer insulation "R" values by installing new windows and doors and by adding foam insulation and new siding to the exterior.

Choosing green building materials, such as Forest Stewardship Council FSC-certified wood products and low-toxicity

paints and finishes, can help ensure that your renovations and home DIY projects are sustainable.

You can also save on your water bills by installing low-flow faucets, shower heads and toilets. Touchless faucets, just like the kind you find in fancy hotel rest rooms, are available for home use, too. They conserve water by flowing only as long as necessary. High-efficiency shower heads work by mixing air into the water, which makes the water droplets clean and rinse more effectively. The City of Saskatoon periodically gives away low-flow shower heads by exchanging them for your old ones. If you missed this year's exchange at the end of February, keep an eye out for future announcements.

Toilets account for more than a third of the water used in the typical home. A leaky toilet can waste up to thousands of gallons of water in a year. An ultra low-flow toilet uses about half as much water as your current one. Even better, a dual flush toilet works by using one of two flushing cycles, depending on what you've put in it. There are two flush buttons on the tank. Press "1" for number one, "2" for number two. ■





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ECOLIFE

The Green Room Tips for Healthier Floors and Walls

The new home smell that greets you when you enter a newly-constructed building may evoke pleasant memories, but that odour is also a sign that the products being used are emitting gases that aren't so pleasant.

Volatile organic compounds (VOCs), as they're called, consist of a variety of chemicals, some of which may have short or long-term adverse health effects. Concentrations can be up to ten times higher in our indoor environments than anything we might be subjected to outdoors.

There are more than 400 different compounds, found in literally thousands of sources, including paints and lacquers, paint strippers, cleaning supplies, pesticides, building materials, furnishings, carpeting and flooring, aerosol sprays and air fresheners, and craft materials including glues and adhesives.

Fortunately, there is also no shortage of things we can do to reduce the levels of emissions in our homes, and many of the solutions are not difficult.

As a first step, whenever you buy a new product, ask about off-gassing potential. Manufac-



Sustainable wood, bamboo hardwood flooring. Photo: iStockphoto.com/lacer

turers are becoming more aware of consumers' concerns. It's now easier than ever to choose products that are easier on the environment. After product choice, there are other handy steps to follow that will help you reduce VOCs in the home.

Greener Floors

Use carpeting selectively. By reducing the amount of it in your home, you reduce a potential source of off-gassing. If you do choose carpeting, avoid products with latex backing. In addition, natural materials, such as wool or cotton won't produce gases (but ask whether they have been treated with chemicals that might).

Don't forget that glues and adhesives contribute to off-gas-

ing, too. Look for low-VOC adhesive, or, instead of gluing carpet to your floor, use nail strips.

While you're at it, look into recycled carpeting. At the same time as you're protecting your home environment, you can reduce waste and pollution in the external environment, too. Some manufacturers recycle old milk cartons and other plastics into new carpets. They'll even take your old carpeting to add to their recycling processes.

Look for the Green Label Plus label. Developed by the Carpet and Rug Institute, this certification provides independent testing that identifies carpet and adhesives with very low

emissions of VOCs.

Instead of carpeting, why not go for the warmth and appeal of natural wood flooring? Bamboo and cork are sustainable and less likely to contain volatile compounds than other types of flooring.

Bamboo, which is actually a type of tropical grass, is an excellent alternative to hardwood because it's harvested from fast-growing, more renewable plants. Yet, it looks like hardwood, is as easy to install and maintain, but is more durable. It's available pre-stained and sealed in a broad choice of colours.

Cork offers versatility and durability. It's available in different colours and patterns to create just the right mood to suit the interior of any home. It resists dampness, won't rot, and repels scratches and dents. Working with cork is much like working with laminated wood flooring. Since it's not glued down, it's a good choice for older homes with uneven floors.

Tile and stone can create a more rustic look, but also can be quite stylish. Used with passive solar heating, these materials help moderate the interior temperature of the home. They're easy to clean and are a good choice for people with allergies. In addition to conventional tiles,



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Energy Efficient Rebate for New Homes – Build and buy an energy efficient new home and you can receive a rebate of up to \$2,400.

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there are also choices made from recycled glass, rubber and other useable consumer waste.

Forest Stewardship Council FSC-certified hardwood, softwood and laminates provide an assurance that your flooring was produced in a sustainable manner. Reclaimed wood flooring, made from salvaged timbers or old flooring, is also an option.

Don't forget about the potential of sealants, stains and polishes, used to protect your floor, to contain volatile or harmful chemicals. Check with manufacturers to make sure you're choosing low-VOC or natural products.

Greener Paints

Almost every manufacturer now offers a low-odour, low-VOC or low-toxicity line of primers, paints, stains and sealants.

Water-based natural paints, stains and sealants are a good choice for areas of low humidity, because they are less resistant to moulds and mildews than

conventional products. Natural oil-based enamel paints can be used in humid areas instead.

Milk paints are made from a mixture of milk protein (casein), lime, clay and natural earth pigments. The result is a long-lasting, non-toxic coating that bonds to surfaces by forming a natural resin, calcium caseinate. They come in powdered form and are mixed with water.

On wood surfaces, such as cabinets and counters, consider using finishes made from natural waxes and oils, such as beeswax, carnauba wax, candelilla wax, or soya oil, sunflower oil, or even thistle.

Alternative wall coverings, such as wallpapers and coverings made from natural fibres, add to the decor of a room in a way that paints can't. There are a variety of natural fibres to choose from, including seagrass, jute, bamboo, cattail and sisal, but recycled paper and polyester provide creative options as well. ■



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SUPPLIERS

From Hard-to-Find Parts to Urban Treasure

ReStore Sells Recycled Building Supplies

One way homeowners, renovators and builders can go green is to find used or reclaimed building supplies for their projects.

Finding new life for old, oftentimes unused, items creates a host of benefits. It trims your consumption of new resources, and reduces greenhouse gases that would be produced in manufacturing processes. It cuts down on waste, reducing pollution and slowing the growth of landfill sites. The need to transport materials from far away is minimized, saving on fuel and infrastructure costs. New markets are created for perfectly good materials that would otherwise be lost.

Plus, when you use reclaimed materials in Saskatoon, you can help more of our citizens become home owners.

Habitat for Humanity's ReStore, which expanded to a new location at Avenue D South in May, accepts donations of building materials,

flooring, carpeting, appliances, furniture, fixtures and accessories, then sells them as supplies for low cost home renovations. Sales provide revenues to help Habitat for Humanity build simple, decent houses in Saskatoon.

Most donations come from the general public, says ReStore General Manager Rod Lund. Builders are also big contributors. A lot of the time, people refurbishing a new home to their tastes will remove things like lights, cabinets and other fixtures and donate them to the ReStore.

"They'll go through and take everything out and give it to us," says Lund. "So, we'll get new lights and cabinets and everything else."

"We're also the point of distribution for a lot of surplus assets," he says.

Builders sometimes find that they are overstocked on materials. They may have enough to complete one job, but not enough to complete the next, at least not without having to order mismatched supplies.

"Say, a roofing company over the course of a year has got a bundle of this, four bundles of that, 10 bundles of a

different colour, not enough to do a roof. What are they going to do with it? They donate it to us."

Someone building a shed or other small project would find the builder's surplus ideal for their own use.

Similarly, products returned to retail outlets can now find their way to the ReStore. Most consumers don't realize that, in the past, stores that accepted customer returns had little choice but to destroy the goods. Retailers were prevented from re-selling them and it was too costly for manufacturers to take them back. Except for perhaps a few missing, but easily found, parts or a lost set of instructions, the goods were essentially brand new, yet consigned to the crusher.

Unsold inventories of discontinued items also have to go somewhere.

Now, those products end up at the ReStore. Habitat has agreements with Home Depot, Rona, Co-Op, Costco and other outlets to accept donations of customer returns and discontinued inventory.

"The Habitat ReStore is one of the best kept secrets

in Saskatoon," says Lund. He jokes that regular customers don't want to tell anybody else because they don't want to miss out on all the good deals.

"We're more than interested in making sure the whole city knows about us," says Lund.

Those good deals extend to finding just the right pieces to complete a set or to make vital repairs.

"Say you're fixing your cabinet doors," says Lund. "Your kitchen cabinets are 25 years old and you've broken one hinge. You cannot replace that by going to a store. However, come to Habitat for Humanity and you can find that one hinge from 25 years ago."

The store is the ideal supplier for a rising trend in "going retro", says Lund. Customers looking for pieces to complement the period of their homes find them here.

When university students head back to school, they'll head off to the ReStore for desks and other office furniture.

In fact, the store is also the point of distribution for all the surplus assets for the university, says Lund.

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"Desks, chairs, tables, cupboards – all of that stuff comes to us. Basically, all that stuff the university used to sell once a month, we will now do that."

Of course, no building supply store would be useful without building supplies.

"We have doors, windows, we don't get a lot of lumber, but what we do get is a lot of things like architectural moulding," says Lund.

The store is often invited to salvage materials from houses being torn down. It's not always easy finding stuff, but when it's feasible, Lund says they will go and cherry pick from demolition sites. Electrical panels, registers, cold air vents, toilets, sinks, tubs, fixtures, doors and cabinets get recycled at the ReStore. The store only accepts materials in good condition, so consumers can be assured they're not buying junk.

"Sometimes you get some six-panel doors that are really great," says Lund. "We have people looking for six-panel

doors. They're not looking for a door. They may want to use them for headboards. They may want to use them for coffee tables. They may want to use them for art displays. There are a huge number of things that they want to use these things for, not just for what they were originally designed for."

Copper wire and old aluminium windows might not make it to the sales floor, but the metal can be sold for scrap.

Occasionally, there is treasure.

"A really good claw foot tub, in Vancouver, will sell for \$1500 to \$2000," says Lund. "Here they don't sell for as much, but we'll still sell one for \$400 to \$500. There are people who want those big old claw foot tubs."

But purple is out.

Farmers and ranchers look for old bathtubs to use as horse troughs, but they won't buy the purple ones.

"The horses won't drink from purple tubs," says Lund. ■

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THE CITY

Helping with Housing Saskatoon's New Rental Rebate Program

During the past two decades, the City of Saskatoon has experienced relatively little investment in new rental unit construction. Although the recent economic boom in Saskatoon has caused significant upward pressure on rental rates, there has not been a lot of desire shown by housing developers towards building new rental units. This problem isn't unique to Saskatoon.

Nationally, very few rental units have been constructed since the 1980s. Homeownership and condo-conversions offer a much faster rate of return than owning and managing rental units.

The City of Saskatoon is currently developing an incentive program to help entice housing developers to consider adding new rental stock in Saskatoon. This would be a one-time incentive designed to achieve a target of 1,000 new rental units within a two year time frame.

The program is based on a land cost rebate available to all developers of new rental units in the city. There are specific re-



quirements to be met before the rebate can be provided:

- units must be constructed within a defined time period (e.g. within 24 months).
- The units must remain rental units for a specified time period after construction (e.g. 15 years).
- 20% of the units must be offered as entry level units.

The City of Saskatoon estimates that the land component of a typical rental unit is equal to \$20,000 per unit. The program will allow developers to recoup 50% to 75% of their land costs from the following incentives:

- a. Five-year tax abatement (estimated present value of \$5,500)

- b. \$5,000 for each rental unit constructed

- c. An additional \$5,000 for each entry level unit constructed.

Entry level housing is defined as households with income levels that are above the minimum income level requirements to access social housing, but below the level required to purchase a house on the open market. The provincial minimum income levels for social housing are \$52,000 for a family and \$44,500 for individuals.

Although a new incentive program may help, it is not certain that this incentive at the municipal level alone will be sufficient to encourage investment into new rental unit construc-

tion. Fundamental tax changes are needed at the provincial and federal level to create the environment necessary to redirect investment dollars towards new rental unit construction. Having said that, the City can play its part in creating this investment environment by showing leadership and initiative within the local marketplace.

For more information about the Rental Construction Rebate Program, contact:

Alan Wallace

Manager,

Neighbourhood Planning

250.975.2650

alan.wallace@saskatoon.ca



The Largest in Saskatchewan Revitalization of Historic Pleasant Hill Neighbourhood

In 2002, with the help of residents and stakeholders, the City of Saskatoon undertook a Local Area Plan (LAP) to assess and begin improving conditions in the neighbourhood of Pleasant Hill.

Situated west of the CPR railway, south of 22nd Street, Pleasant Hill had started to show signs of decline. Property values had stagnated, safety was a concern, streets were unpaved and property poorly maintained. These had all contributed to a negative public image of this once attractive, thriving community.

The plan focused on key

improvements in the Pleasant Hill neighbourhood including new housing, the reduction of vacant lots, property maintenance, increased

safety and land development.

In 2006, a funding commitment by five orders of government – federal, provincial, municipal, the De-

partment of Learning and Saskatoon Greater Catholic Schools – helped make possible a major redevelopment project in Pleasant Hill. Called an Urban Development Agreement (UDA), funding are provided for new infrastructure to produce entire blocks of clean, fully-serviced land, ready for redevelopment.

Now called the Pleasant Hill Revitalization Project, the redevelopment is located along 20th Street West between Avenue N South and Avenue P South. A concept plan has been created with the help of many Pleasant Hill community residents and stakeholders. A revitalization concept plan forms



the basis for all major expenditures involving construction, infrastructure and capital expenditures such as a new school.

The City has purchased the properties on Avenue O South, Avenue N South and 20th Street West from a single landlord, who first offered these properties to the City in 2004. The site is now being prepared for a mixed-use development. The proposal includes land acquisition, site preparation, clean up, demolition and infrastructure upgrades.

It is envisioned that the City of Saskatoon will retain ownership of the land in the short term and release it to development partners when it is ready for construction. The proposal allows the City of Saskatoon to share some of the risk of investing in this neighborhood and attract a diverse group of partners that includes other levels of government, non-profit groups and the private sector.

The redevelopment is focused around four significant land uses:

1. Housing
2. Education
3. Green space
4. Opportunities for community space

The purpose of this project is to create economic and social development in the Pleasant Hill area, in keeping with this core neighbourhood's Local Area Plan (LAP).

Nearly all of the existing dwellings were inspected and deemed unsuitable for relocation and required demolition. Habitat for Humanity may be able to salvage some of the dwellings by relocating, refurbishing and re-selling them. Significant expenditures have been

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made to ensure all sites are environmentally clean for future residential, park and school use.

On May 13, 2008 the Province of Saskatchewan's Ministry of Education announced over \$8 million of new funding towards construction of a new elementary school to replace the existing St. Mary's School in Pleasant Hill. The Catholic School Board is exploring the possibility of integrating a new school and community space with the redevelopment.

The City of Saskatoon is examining the prospect of purchasing more property in the area to enlarge the scope of the redevelopment. The Pleasant Hill Redevelopment proposal is a rare opportunity to acquire up to 38 properties on two and a half blocks.

Community consultation and involvement have been a

significant aspect of the revitalization effort so far. The community has been involved in the drafting of the concept plan, will review all development proposals and will be consulted about the community space in the new school and the new park space.

The total value of the revitalization project is so far estimated to be over \$40 million. It is believed that the Pleasant Hill Revitalization Project is the largest redevelopment ever undertaken in a residential neighbourhood in Saskatchewan.

■ ALAN WALLACE, NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING, COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

■ PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF THE CITY OF SASKATOON



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BACKWORDS

Sustainable and Substantive It's Fashionable and Practical to Be Green

"Green" was the theme of *The View*, that all-female discussion TV show with Barbara Walters and other opinionated women, on St. Patrick's Day last spring. And we don't mean shamrocks, green beer and leprechaun costumes. We're talking green, as in environmental consciousness.

The whole show was devoted to such topics as green fashion – clothes made from renewable material such as bamboo; green household cleaning products – made of natural, renewable ingredients; and things everybody can do to contribute to a sustainable world.

When the green concept is embraced by such a middle-of-the-road popular American TV show like *The View*, you know it's gone mainstream. Being green is no longer (a) a hold-over from hippie days, (b) a sign of modern paranoia or guilt about not personally contributing enough to save the environment, or (c) a passing fashion statement in thought like joining an exotic religion for a while.

To the contrary, being green is here to stay and it is highly un-



likely to fade in popularity. In fact, it will likely increase in mainstream acceptance and become embedded in most people's consciousness, just like knowing the importance of avoiding debt, eating right and exercising.

The Green Thing just can't be avoided. Governments, from municipal to international, are

implementing major environmentally-positive policies, from reducing green house gas emissions to saving energy. Homeowners are offered financial incentives by power companies for making their homes more green-friendly. "Green" is a popular category on quiz game shows and a major selling point in many commercials.

There are even green makeover shows. The host of one in New Zealand enters people's households and guilts them into becoming more sustainable. On the episode I saw, she visited three young, single women renting a huge energy-wasting manse, and pointed out to them all the energy and dollars they were splurging by not thinking sustainably enough about their living habits. She even warned them about the perils of eating food not cooked at home and the dangers of the non-natural make-up they put on their faces every day.

I find all of this amusingly ironic considering that back in the 70s, the era in which I grew up, being green was the radical, counter-culture thing to do. In order to change the world, many of us tried to eat vegetarian and organic food, wear clothing made of "natural" fibres or recycled from the consignment store, closed off rooms at home that didn't need heat in winter, and had an organized waste recycling system for cans, glass bottles, newspapers and compost ingredients. We donated money to save whales and seals and attended concerts that raised more to save the planet.

Of course, the 80s took over, and fashionable consciousness



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The Result: After hearing that the Government of Saskatchewan would contribute 25% to green projects, in addition to the 25% from the federal government, owner Brian Sawatzky installed 40 solar panels on the roof of his hotel.

With a few additional low-cost retrofits, he now saves \$50K on his utility bills (almost 30%) and has reduced CO₂ output by 205 tonnes.

What started out as a way to save money and protect the environment evolved into the largest solar water heating system in the province.

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swung back to the popularity of excess. Except for a small hard core percentage of green practitioners, indulgence, whether it be driving big fuel-guzzling cars or living in energy-wasting, castle-like domiciles, became the popular mindset.

Of course, we all know that this type of living philosophy is still very prevalent and particularly apparent in the Okanagan. But what is really interesting is that even those who have such dollars to throw around are now embracing the Green Thing—possibly because it's the mainstream, fashionable way to be, or because they know it's the right thing to do.

When you look, for example, at many of the new developments and homes being constructed locally, no matter how large they are, many incorporate environmentally-positive features, whether it's including low-emission, triple-glazed windows, cork flooring or recycled, natural finishing materials.

A couple of years ago, I visited the newly-constructed 15,000 square foot summer home of an internationally-known hockey player who had fallen in love with the Okanagan. Not only was it beautiful and ostentatious, but it had some of the most directional green features I had ever witnessed in a new home.

Green is a selling point for modern real estate, no matter what the square footage. Home

buyers with moolah are willing to purchase residential properties with geothermal heating and solar panels because they know it's not only societally impressive, but in the long run will save them money.

There's a reason why rich people stay rich. Besides saving money, they know a good investment when they see it...and look at long-term gain. And it doesn't hurt to be known for contributing to sustainability of the planet.

But even for those who earn less money than those at the top, being green is a good thing. Not only does it enable them to be more self-sufficient in an increasingly complex world, but it contributes to a collective future, and gives people the feeling that they are individually doing what they can.

Going green means more than decorating a home with botanical prints or ordering food from the local organic produce delivery company – not that these are bad things. It means thinking more consciously about all the actions one takes in a day, and figuring out how to make a minor positive change – for oneself, and for the planet.

So now, back to making that organic salad lunch composed of ingredients grown within a 100-mile radius and re-organizing my recycling centre. And I'm thinking very seriously of riding to work on a bicycle.

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- > Anytime calling at 4¢ per minute within Canada, the U.S. and to 50 countries in the U.K., Europe, Asia Pacific, and South America.
- > Access to Shaw International Direct – competitive rates all around the world.

\$35⁹⁵**
PER MONTH
SOHO DIGITAL PHONE
FIRST THREE MONTHS

SHAW DIGITAL PHONE

This plan is great for heavy long-distance business users.

- > Voicemail, Call Waiting, Call Display, Call Forward, 3-Way Calling, Call Return, and Anonymous and Selective Call Blocking.
- > Anytime calling at 4¢ per minute within Canada, the U.S. and to 50 countries in the U.K., Europe, Asia Pacific, and South America.
- > Access to Shaw International Direct – competitive rates all around the world.

Also included:

- > 1000 minutes per month of long-distance calling within Canada and the U.S.
- > One Distinctive Ring number.

In addition to business solutions, Shaw offers a whole range of entertainment products and services. Visit SHAW.CA today to learn more.

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